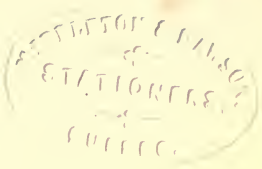
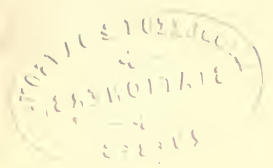
TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY
3 1761 04828 6785



SERMONS.



LONDON:
R. CLAY, SON, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS,
BREAD STREET HILL.

SERMONS.

BY

GEORGE JEHOSHAPHAT MOUNTAIN, D.D., D.C.L.,

LATE BISHOP OF QUEBEC.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE.

LONDON:
BELL AND DALDY, 186, FLEET STREET.
CAMBRIDGE: DEIGHTON, BELL, AND CO.
1865.

OCT 2 1 1998

TO

THE SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF QUEBEC,

AND TO

THE CONGREGATION OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH,

(TO WHOM THESE SERMONS WERE ALL DELIVERED),

This Volume

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

THE Editor desires to express his regret at the delay, occasioned by circumstances beyond his control, which has occurred in the publication of this volume. He has thought it better to give the Sermons as an earnest of his desire to comply with the wish of the Synod, so kindly conceived and expressed; but he must ask for further indulgence in order to be enabled to meet the principal object of the subjoined resolution in a satisfactory manner. The correspondence and documents which he has already examined reach back beyond the beginning of the present century, and it is obvious that the work of selecting and condensing the materials requires considerable time. He has only to add that any profits which he may receive from the sale of this volume will be given to the Labrador Mission Fund of the Diocese of Quebec.

Resolution of the Synod of the Diocese of Quebec, adopted at its Fifth Session, July, 1863.

Moved by Rev. HENRY ROE,
Seconded by Mr. SPRAGGE,

"That it is the earnest desire of the members of this Synod that a memoir of our late beloved Bishop, the chief ruler of the Church in Canada for so many eventful years of her history, should be published.

"That it is also the wish of the members of the Church generally to possess some of the eloquent and admirable sermons of that lamented Prelate.

"That, therefore, a Committee of three be named by the chair to convey to the Rev. A. W. Mountain the unanimous request of this Synod, that he should prepare such a Memoir, and also publish one or more volumes of the Sermons of the late Bishop; and that the Committee be also requested to obtain subscribers to the Memoir and Sermons, should it meet the wishes of Mr. Mountain to publish them by subscription.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

PAGE

THE TEN VIRGINS—St. Matthew xxv. 1, 2 1

SERMON II.

THE JUDGMENT OF MAN—1 Cor. iv. 3, 4, 5 16

SERMON III.

THE BURDEN OF DUMAH—Isaiah xxi. 11, 12 28

SERMON IV.

THE UNPRODUCTIVE VINEYARD—Isaiah v. 1 39

SERMON V.

COMPLIANCE WITH ORDINANCES—Nahum i. 15 53

SERMON VI.

THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS—Acts viii. 8 67

SERMON VII.

CHRIST COMING TO HIS OWN—St. John i. 10—13 80

SERMON VIII.

THE PUNISHMENT OF SODOM—St. Luke xvii. 32, 33 93

SERMON IX.

THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH—Genesis xxxix. 1 105

SERMON X.

PAGE

The Choice of Moses—Hebrews xi. 24, 25 122

SERMON XI.

The Threefold Witness in Earth—1 St. John v. 8 . . . 134

SERMON XII.

The Prince of this World—St. John xiv. 29—31 148

SERMON XIII.

Prayer—St. Luke xviii. 1 160

SERMON XIV.

The Journeyings of Israel a Type of the Christian Pilgrimage—Deut. viii. 2, 3. 179

SERMON XV.

Confirmation and the Sacraments—St. Luke i. 6 . . . 191

SERMON XVI.

Words and Thoughts Acceptable before God—Psalm xix. 14, 15 208

SERMON XVII.

The Mystery of Godliness—1 Tim. iii. 16 220

SERMON XVIII.

Sins and Good Works Manifest beforehand—1 Tim. v. 24, 25 233

SERMON XIX.

God in Creation and Providence—Isaiah xlv. 18 246

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE TEN VIRGINS.

St. Matt. XXV. 1, 2.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, if they were opened for the mere purposes of intellectual gratification or curious research, would not disappoint the labour so bestowed upon them. Their force, their originality, their genuine and simple pathos, their unstudied and, at the same time, unequalled sublimity—the very peculiar characteristics which attach to them from the extreme antiquity of some portions of the book, and from the connexion of all either with the earliest history of the world, or with the manners and usages of remote times and countries, still partially prevailing or exhibiting their traces in the East,—all these are sources opened to us in the Bible, which are replete with interest and rich in information.

Thus, in the parable before us, the illustration is drawn from a custom which was thoroughly familiar

to the hearers of our Lord; and it is related by some travellers of modern times that in the matrimonial procession by the light of lamps or torches, which they witnessed in certain parts of the world, the bearers of these lights are provided with an apparatus for carrying a fresh supply of oil to renew them when they begin to fail.

But let it be hoped that in reading the Word of God we enter upon our task with higher feelings than these. The place whereon we stand is holy ground. Whatever be the views with which we explore the treasuries of human science and learning, we must draw near to Christ as He stands shadowed forth to us under the old covenant, or is made palpable in the assumption of our nature under the new, with the motives and convictions of those who said to Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? *Thou* hast the words of *eternal life.*" My brethren, let it be thus that we now examine and personally apply to ourselves the parable of the ten virgins, who go forth to meet the bridegroom. These virgins we may consider as representing persons who profess the Christian religion,—I do not mean *professors* in a restricted sense, according to the phraseology of a school, but all, according to the language of our own Liturgy, who *profess and call themselves Christians.* Wise or foolish, these virgins all alike have their lamps *lighted,* and fed with a sufficiency of oil to maintain the present flame. The difference lies in *this,* that the wise virgins had provided a *reserve* of oil, while this precaution had been wholly overlooked by the foolish.

The mere lighting of the lamps may be taken to signify our adoption of Christianity, our reception into the Church of God by the rite of baptism, and our subsequent recognition of that act by certain formal and customary compliances. The reserve of oil, provided in the other cases, denotes our homefelt reception of the seed of the word of life into the heart, and our rooted attachment to the principles of our religion; it denotes our consistent fulfilment of our Christian obligations; our improvement of that grace assured and conveyed to us in the covenant of which we are first made partakers in baptism; our devout and intelligent use of all the continued means of that grace; our constant subjection to the living principle of faith in the Son of God; our earnest cultivation of the *fruits of the Spirit, all goodness, and righteousness, and truth:* in short, our *provided condition,* our state of *preparation* for death and judgment, those awful events hanging over our destiny as men, which are represented by the uncertain coming of the bridegroom.

The prominent lesson, therefore, of this parable, is a warning against the awful danger of indifference and carelessness in religion—a warning against that deplorable proneness which we see so extensively prevalent among mankind, to neglect their *first* concern, the work of preparation for another world; to say to themselves "Peace, when there is no peace," upon the one subject of supreme importance—their welfare in eternity. They satisfy themselves, they indulge a feeling of security, though in a state of actual difficulty and peril; they

suffer a fatal sloth to creep over their whole spiritual man, and the seed of all spiritual life to be choked in their breasts by the cares and the riches and the pleasures of the world; they lose all lively and effectual remembrance of the fact that they have immortal souls, and of the equally certain facts that those souls having contracted sin, their only deliverance from the curse of sin is in the remedies provided in the Gospel, their only hope of profiting by those remedies is inseparably coupled with their own watchfulness in duty and constancy in prayer. All this they forget and keep out of sight, as if it were something which did not belong to them, or which they could afford to leave for a more convenient season. In the meantime the Bridegroom is coming; and, behold! He comes. They rise at the midnight cry, but their lamps have gone out; their oil is expended, and where are they to look for more? In the suddenness of their terror and the agitation of their distress, they fly to others in the hope of relief, but in vain: the wise and provident can, in this case, make no transfer of their store.

Men would fain reconcile, if it were possible, the hope of eternal happiness in another world with the full liberty of living as they please in this: they shrink from the picture of so great a change—although coupled with the message of mercy and all the promises of grace and glory—as that of turning from their own way to the way of God; they regard as an unwelcome task the duty of humbling themselves before Him in repentance, although that repentance be a gracious

work within them, the happy renewal of a polluted soul; they revolt against the charge to deny themselves and to take up their cross, although, even with respect to their well-being in this life, sacrifices and acts of self-denial are things plainly essential. The love of God with the whole heart, and the love of their neighbour as themselves, they treat as a flight above them, and abandon all idea of engaging in it, although, in truth, these two principles are the ground-work of all that is good or really great among mankind. They do not choose to be disturbed in their lazy acquiescence in the practice and example of the world, although, by the recorded confession of all ages, the world is vain, deceitful, and corrupt, and, by the testimony of the faith which they profess, its friendship is enmity against God. They accept, in the place of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a kind of compromise and accommodation which the world provides for its disciples—a system of dispensations by its infallible and sovereign authority from things which the Bible very plainly requires. "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," is the voice of their Saviour and their Friend; but it falls like the voice of a stranger upon their ears. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light," is a sound which they hear, and then turn themselves round to sleep again. They cannot be prevailed upon to look upon this world as what it really is—the school of their training for the world to come; the place of trial, in which good and evil, each with its corresponding results

in another hour, offer themselves promiscuously to their hands, the good often distasteful to immediate inclination, and the evil perpetually in some seductive disguise; a place, therefore, in which they are called upon at all times to discriminate and to determine, to choose with nicety and to reject with firmness. They will not remember that they are afloat upon a stormy sea, where it never can be a justifiable part to drive before the wind and to leave things to themselves, but where they must steer by the chart of Revelation and the compass of God's eternal truth. No! charm He never so wisely, they refuse to listen to the voice of the charmer. They would be willing enough to please God, if they might take their own method of doing so, and would very readily avail themselves of the tidings that they have an inheritance in heaven, if the terms upon which it is offered would only spare their pride and self-indulgence while on earth. What they are called to seems hard—what they must forego is what they are fond of; and they do not stay to hear of the promises of succour from Him Whose strength is made perfect in our weakness, or the motives, the springs of action which are imparted, the privileges, the hopes, the prospects which are conveyed, to every believer in the great salvation of our God. All this they forget and put away from their thoughts—it is something foreign to the habit of their minds. Holy affections, spiritual thoughts, earnest concern for their own salvation, love to their fellow creatures for Christ's sake, zeal for the kingdom of God,—these they may admit, when pressed upon

the subject, to be very necessary; but, necessary as they are, they do not heed them, till God, in just retribution for their unthankful negligence, withdraws from them the grace which they have despised, and leaves them to be consumed by the enemies of their salvation. "From him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." And thus, while they are blindly groping for their way, they encounter the Bridegroom, they are overtaken by "the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

Turn, then, to the Lord while the day of salvation lasteth, and "exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." But it is not only to the unawakened worldling or the frivolous child of vanity that the parable addresses its note of caution and alarm. Its warnings, my brethren, come home to us all. While the bridegroom tarried, they *all*, wise as well as foolish, they *all* slumbered and slept. How truly, how undisguisedly does the Scripture show us to ourselves! "What? could ye not watch with Me one hour?" is the mild reproach which our Lord had occasion to address to those who were His own closest adherents, and who had just received His own particular and pathetic charge, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here *and watch.*" Alas! who can say that he has not incurred the liability to many and many a similar reproach from his Master? that he has not often been dull, and heavy, and unprepared for action, in that service which should enlist all his energies, and

kindle all the fervour of his love? Motives the most spiritual, the most pure, the most exalted, are sometimes found weaker in their power and less availing to endurance and success than such as, at best, are mixed with some baser alloy: the pride of system in the philosopher; the love of this world's applause and honour in the man of ambition; the prostrate awe or the self-righteous complacency of the superstitious devotee; the power of a meretricious excitement in the goaded mind of the enthusiast; the flattering effect of an exhibition of gifts, in religious proceedings of a peculiar stamp,—all these act more readily upon human nature than principles of a higher order, removed from earthly contact or animal sense; and instances are known of their producing effects which serve to reproach the disciples of a better school.

This weakness of nature and deficiency of performance we cannot too freely or too feelingly acknowledge; but we must beware of turning the admission into an excuse for any relaxation of our duty. Such a plea could only aggravate our criminality. The consciousness of weakness should be the very incentive to our standing upon the guard, and exercising the more earnestness in seeking that grace which we are expressly taught to be *sufficient for us*. Blessed indeed are those servants, who rise so well above the infirmities of nature that their lamps may almost be said to be always trimmed and burning brightly; whom their Lord, come when He will, shall find watching. Blessed are they who, like the apostle, know both how to be abased and

how to abound, and have learnt to use this world as not abusing it; who, in all changes of this lower atmosphere, protect and preserve their faith, as it were, in its freshness and its flower; who in all varieties of fortune, in all circumstances of human life, maintain their independence of the things on the earth, and keep themselves unspotted from earthly defilement; who enter into the warfare of the world and sustain their appointed part in its affairs; who mix in its business, who thankfully enjoy its comforts, if bestowed upon them, who fulfil all the claims of civil duty, and discharge all the courtesies of social intercourse, but whose *treasure* is not *here*, whose hope is laid up with Him that seeth in secret, who truly regard themselves as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and feel their *home* to be in the house of their Master above, gone before to prepare a place for them, that where He is, there they may be also.

We are warned also in this parable, as in so many other lessons from the word of God, against the danger of *delay*. Woe be to him who shifts over to the day of sickness and the bed of death that work which ought to be the work of his whole life. Men may be received at the eleventh hour who can plead that no man has hired them before; but will this precedent avail those who from the morning, and all the day through, have been called into the vineyard, and stood idle still? We do not set limits to the grace of God; but it is rare, indeed, that those who have trifled away their happy opportunities of serving Him through life effectually turn to Him

at its close; and often, where some seeming symptoms of conversion, with prompters, possibly more zealous than judicious, busy round the couch, have served in human judgment to *make out the case*, it may be feared that it is a hollow and fallacious hope. Many such supposed conversions, in the prospect of death, have been lamentably falsified by an unexpected recovery or a reprieve from the last sentence of the law. But even for such a conversion as this, who can presume upon being indulged with the opportunity? Who can say that he shall not be surprised by a call too sudden for the slightest preparation? Hurry and consternation are pictured to us as the only portion of those who had left themselves unprovided with a reserve of oil. At midnight there is a cry made, "The bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him." Will there be time given, after that cry, to prepare? Will death or judgment accommodate themselves to the procrastinations of the infatuated sinner?—hang off till he is ready, and has had space to go through some exhibition of repentance? It is to the coming of Christ to judgment that the parable appears particularly to point; but this warning and all similar warnings have precisely the same force when considered with reference to our own death—for we all know that as death leaves us, judgment will find us. We are so far from having any warrant from the word of God to declare the time of judgment, that its being kept from us is a conspicuous feature of His dealings with us, and one to which our attention is pointedly directed; the utter uncertainty of the period being again and again urged

as a special motive for constant preparation. But whether it be far off or near, judgment *is coming;* and death, which is always near, requires the very same preparation as if death and judgment were simultaneous. *That* we all confess, my brethren—it is a very familiar and a very common-place admonition; but do we all lay it effectually to heart? Let us remember that our negligence and carelessness in this point are rendered the more inexcusable if occurrences themselves are so ordained to fall that they read us a special lesson, that they preach to us with a voice of power, upon the subject. And have we not—it is not my intention to particularize, nor yet to indulge in descriptive touches which work upon the susceptible feelings of nature—but have we not, looking back upon the past summer, and looking round upon the mourners who go about our streets, and thinking of what has now freshly happened in the highest quarter known within the land—have we not had warning upon warning, alike solemn and tender, to teach us not only how old and long-respected members of our community will, one by one, drop off, but how death may be close to any of us in unlooked-for shapes—how scenes of preparation for festivity and promised happiness may be changed in a moment to scenes of overwhelming sorrow—how families may be bereaved by one short stroke of their earthly stay—how, by some sudden casualty or the rapid action of some fatal disease, the sunshine of the domestic circle may be darkened by the gloom of death, and fair hopes and fondly made calculations of our earthly future shattered

at once into nothing?* Let us, then,—returning to the general thought that our preparation for judgment and our preparation for death are one and the same, and that the latter may, at any instant, surprise us—possess our minds with these ideas: let us figure to ourselves that the universal crash of nature and the general doom of the world were to come suddenly upon us. Let us suppose that now, at this moment, those "things which shall be hereafter," and in which we must rise to have our part, were to burst upon our astonished sight,—that, far more terrible than the nightly alarm of fire, far more hopeless than shipwreck, far more appalling than the rending earthquake, the conflagration of "the great globe itself," the rapid dismemberment and absolute destruction of the whole frame of the universe, of the whole visible workmanship of God, were to begin, to come near us, to shake the spot where we stand; and to threaten, like an irresistible tornado, to whirl us in among the fragments of creation. Are we prepared? Can we be glad and full of hope? Do we feel that our treasure is laid up in heaven? that we shall be caught up to meet the Lord, and to be ever with Him? And of all the pride, the pomp, the property,—of all the indulgences, the vanities, the means of pleasure,—of all the fabrics of human industry, the contrivances of skill, the subjects of eager contention, the materials for sagacious speculation or laborious research which have now served their appointed end, and, condemned by the fiat of God, are perishing in the ruin which thunders round us,—

* Preached in the autumn of 1859.

of all these is there nothing to which our strongest hopes and dearest affections are linked so closely as to be involved in their destruction? Once more, are we prepared? or have we left our preparation for that hour of confusion and alarm? Alas! how shall we make it then, in an hour when "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the mighty men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, shall hide themselves in dens, and shall say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb—" (how much is conveyed in that expression, *the wrath of the Lamb*, and how high must be the provocation, how deep the curse of unpardoned sin, when the very emblem of gentleness, and the willing victim offered in expiation for a guilty world, is represented as incensed?) "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" No possible resource will then remain to those who have not profited by their day of grace on earth. Vain will be the appeal, as we have already seen, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps have gone out." Vain will be the expedient suggested, "Go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." "Every man shall bear his own burthen." Money can purchase no exemptions: the Church has no market of indulgences, no deposit of unappropriated saintly merits, which (however they may pass current in *this* world) can be turned to account in the other for

those who have forfeited their interest in Christ. Souls are ransomed, as we are told by an apostle, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." "While they went to buy, the bridegroom came. And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the *door was shut.* And afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I know you not." O horrible and hopeless exclusion, to be for ever disowned by Him who died for us, for ever shut out from blessedness and peace, for ever condemned to suffer the wrath of God! Prepare, then, my brethren—prepare even now for all which lies beyond this little life. Do you believe in God? I will borrow the answer furnished in a similar kind of case by the Apostle, "I know that you believe." Do you regard yourselves as beings made to live for ever? do you admit that you can look for salvation through the blood of Christ alone? do you seriously consider as REALITIES all that is told you in the Bible of sin, of Satan, of grace, of prayer, of the sacraments, of the inspiration of Scripture, and finally of the resurrection, and judgment, and the life of the world to come? O suffer not then your lamp to go out in darkness, suffer not the light of these awful truths, which should guide your steps in safety, to be obscured and smothered; suffer not the tumult of public life, the business, the entanglements, the allurements of the world, its mixed and multiplied pursuits, its comforts or its gaieties (for I do not speak of those plain

gross, broad, positive sins which have sway enough within it,) so to occupy your immortal souls that you must be said to *serve* the world rather than to *serve* God. Men and brethren, are these things so? Are we to be either as the angels of God in heaven, or to be the associates of condemned spirits in that place between which and heaven there is fixed a great and impassable gulf? The question is one which might rouse within us some feeling of concern, and prompt us to ascertain whether we are really in the broad or in the narrow way. "Examine yourselves," then, my brethren, with all the closeness of scrutiny, with all the deep and conscientious earnestness of purpose, which so awful an inquiry demands; "examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves."

SERMON II.

THE JUDGMENT OF MAN.

1 Cor. IV. 3, 4, 5.

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

The fallibility of human judgment is a point which we need not labour to prove. No man denies or can deny it. The very fact that men differ to an infinite extent, and in every conceivable variety of shade, in the views which they adopt upon the same subject, placed in the same way and under the same lights before their eyes, when coupled with the consideration that their opinions cannot all be right; that, in truth, *that* one only can be so which corresponds with the exact reality of the case, while all of them, very often, are proved, in the result, to be totally wrong, this fact, when coupled with this consideration, is of itself enough. And every person who has reached a certain age must be conscious of many changes which have taken place in his own opinions, many instances in which he has reversed his own previous judgment upon men and things. The unfavourable ideas respecting individuals or parties in

a community which are formed in other minds, are based, very commonly, upon some prejudice which refuses to discriminate; upon some envious calumny which has never been examined; upon some suspicious appearance from which an unjust conclusion is hastily formed; upon the influence of some interfering private interests, or of some offence conceived which creates a feeling of dislike, and engenders a spirit of misconstruction. And men, when it suits them, when it serves their advantage, when it conspires with some new indulgence of their passions, when they unite against a common antagonist, or perchance when they are warmed together in scenes of convivial good fellowship, will as strangely pass round to a new opinion as they had rashly adopted its opposite. The wind shifts, and they shift with it. The proverbial inconstancy and fickleness of the multitude are said to have been remarkably exemplified in the case of an illustrious commander of our own country, who, upon being greeted on a public occasion by the most enthusiastic acclamations, significantly pointed (as the report goes) to his own mansion, which bore the sufficiently recent marks of popular violence, prompted by hostile feelings of which he was the object. And this variableness of the crowd may be matched in the circles of society which are above them, and in the individuals of whom those circles are composed.

Men, therefore, in the survey of all this, who affect a certain philosophy of character, despise and disdain, or wish it to be thought that they despise and disdain,

the opinion of the world, and, in some instances, professedly set it at defiance. It is not in such a temper that the Apostle is speaking when he tells the Corinthians that he held it to be a *very small* matter, with reference to the estimation of his ministry, "to be judged of them or of man's judgment." He insists much, in different places, upon the importance to ministerial usefulness of avoiding all needless offence, and preserving, so far as might be compatible with the unshrinking discharge of duty and the maintenance of consistent principle, a good name among men, and conciliating their respect and good-will. But the praise of men for its own sake, or their verdict, favourable or unfavourable, as the test of solid excellence and the touchstone of fidelity before God—these are what he would utterly repudiate. He knew well that, in many cases, "that," in the words of Christ Himself, "which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God;" and he remembered that the same voice had denounced *woe* to the disciples, on the one hand, when all men should speak well of them, and proclaimed blessing, on the other, when they should be reviled and persecuted, and all manner of evil should be said against them falsely for their Master's sake.

The principle, therefore, which he means to establish is his independence of any human judgment as a guide in the execution of his solemn trust—his direct and single reference to the will and pleasure of God, in ascertaining the line which he was to follow and adhering to it. And he proceeds to say, "Yea, I judge not

mine own self"—I do not set up my poor human judgment upon my own doings as the ultimate criterion of my acceptance before God. Whatever I hope, my hope is founded upon His promise in Christ, and the conviction which I do enjoy that, notwithstanding my faults, known or unknown to myself, I have received mercy to be faithful. Upon these words, "Yea, I judge not mine own self," we find, in antiquated but pithy language, the following marginal note, in our own earlier translation of the Bible:—"How can you judge how much or how little I am to be accounted of, seeing that I myselfe, which knowe myselfe better than you doe, and which dare professe that I have walked in my vocation with a good conscience, dare not yet, notwithstanding, challenge anything to myselfe; for I know that I am not unblamable, all this notwithstanding; much lesse, therefore, should I please myselfe as you doe."

The Apostle then adds the words, "For I know nothing by myself"—*i. e.* as will appear at once to those who may consult the original, I am not conscious within myself of being open to any charge against me; "yet am I not hereby justified." Upon these last words we may here take in the remark of an excellent commentator of the last century. The Apostle, he observes, doth not here (in the words "yet am I not hereby justified" following upon the declaration of his standing free from reproach) "intend to say that he and others could have no good assurance of their present justification and favour with God from the testimony of an upright conscience, which, saith St. John (in his first Epistle), gives 'con-

fidence toward God;' for then farewell all joy and comfort in this world! He doth himself assure us, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, that their 'rejoicing' was this, the testimony of their conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity they had their conversation in the world. He adviseth all men, in writing to the Galatians, to 'approve' their actions to themselves, and then shall they have rejoicing in themselves alone, and not in another. His meaning, therefore, is, that our final justification, or absolution from condemnation, depends, not upon the judgment which we pass upon ourselves, but upon that which God the righteous Judge will pass upon us."

The doctrine of justification by faith, upon which this Apostle so largely and fervently insists, is not his direct and immediate subject in the passage which we are here considering; but it is so necessarily involved in this part of his argument, and so obviously suggested by the words which we have just noticed, that we shall naturally rest for a moment upon a familiar and practical contemplation of it. And it will be well if we all take occasion to examine, upon this score, our own personal state of relations with our God.

"How should man be just with God?" There is many an unthinking sinner to whom the import of this question gives no concern. "God is not in all his thoughts," and he scarcely remembers that he has a soul. There are others of a cast somewhat more reflecting, who admit into their contemplations some sense of human responsibility above, and the necessity

of preparation for judgment; but, unlike the pattern of our text, judge *of themselves* (although with some confused and imperfect acceptance, perhaps, of the doctrine of atonement, as a dogma belonging to the system which they profess) that they are, *in themselves*, sufficiently prepared. They are strangers to all the misgivings of a humble spirit, to all the apprehensions of a tender conscience; they say that they *have need of nothing*, and cannot enter into the conception of those views and feelings which, in the very fulness which he often and strongly expresses of conscious integrity and faithfulness, could prompt the prayer of our Apostle to be "found," in the day of account, not having his "own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ," or which could dictate the language of the Psalmist, "Who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanse thou me from my secret faults. If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart: prove me, and examine my thoughts: look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." To lament the degeneracy of their nature, to sigh under the sense of their own corruption, to feel their hourly need of mercy, grace, and light, are emotions which they do not recognise, and sentiments which are foreign to the frame of their minds.

But if they are exempt from any trouble about the sinfulness of their nature, or any self-reproach for the imperfections of their service, are they therefore happy?

Happy? Can men be happy who are not in a condition to appreciate the Gospel,—who do not know the proper meaning of its bringing good tidings of great joy,—who are unacquainted with that joy and peace in believing, which are founded upon a true reception of Christ and His salvation,—who read without any experimental response in their own bosoms to the force and interest of the words, such passages as, "Look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth, so great is His mercy also toward them that fear Him: look how wide also the east is from the west, so far hath He set our sins from us?" Happy? no! happiness is not, cannot be their portion here or hereafter. They have built their whole fabric with untempered mortar; it will fall in the storm, and great and sad will be the fall thereof.

The real wants of the soul of man before God appear often in the awakened consciousness, the lively recognition of those wants, which take, in default of better guidance, a blind direction, and prompt a recourse to the miserable devices of human superstition. It would be easy to bring examples (and examples of the most shocking description), from the records of Paganism, of effects proceeding from an unappeasable remorse for particular crimes, or from a pervading gloomy terror of an exacting justice above us, or from the delirious imagination of purchasing peace and privilege by self-inflicted tortures or voluntary death. The voice of bewildered nature testifies, in all these instances, to the inherent want of *expiation for sin.* But it may be useful to look for examples in Christian communities,

where the faith of the Cross has been obscured by the additions of men; and there are two which here offer themselves very similar to each other, and both sufficiently striking in their character. The first is that of Hénault, a popular French poet, of a licentious and irreligious vein, in the seventeenth century, who, becoming alarmed at the approaches of dissolution, wanted, if the confessor had not, in this instance, been wise enough to prevent it, to receive the viaticum or sacrament with a halter about his neck, upon the floor of his bed-chamber. The other is that of Lulli, a celebrated musician and composer of operas, the cotemporary and countryman of Hénault, who, under the expectation of death, consented, upon the demand of his spiritual adviser, to burn the last of his compositions; but the appearance of danger passing off, declared jestingly that he had taken care to preserve a copy; and then relapsing and being actually upon his death-bed, suffered the utmost pangs of remorse, and submitted, it is said in the narrative to which I refer, to be laid upon a heap of ashes, with a cord about his neck. In this situation, it is added, he expressed a deep sense of his late transgression, and being replaced in his bed, he, *farther* to *expiate* his offence (observe that expression, my brethren), sung to an air of his own composing, the following words, "You must die, sinner; you must die." The want which was felt by these unhappy men was the same which was felt by the thief upon the cross, when, not trusting to the expiatory effect of his own disgrace and sufferings, but looking in true penitence and faith

to the only quarter in which relief could be found, he received the assurance from the lips of his Lord, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

The thief had no opportunity granted of evincing the genuineness of his faith and repentance by a reformed life. Had his life been prolonged, as is pointed out, after one of the fathers, in our own Homilies, this proof must have been afforded, or his hope would have been forfeit,—and in all correct apprehension whatever of an established state of grace before God, that conscious rectitude of principle, and that careful fulfilment of duty which the Apostle asserts for himself, must combine with the sense of peace and reconciliation through Christ and with the reposing of our cause in His hands alone, Who is "able to keep that which we commit to Him against that day." Men are apt most dangerously to separate what ought to be thus combined, and they do so in different ways. One will be found appealing to his honourable conduct and correct moral deportment, which supersede in his own self-deceiving estimate the necessity of his coming as a helpless and undone sinner before God; another will be profuse in disclaimers of his own righteousness, and affirm for himself an absolutely and sensibly assured interest in the merits of the blessed Redeemer, while he is so deplorably defective in some plain and common duties, as to prove, after all, his rottenness of faith.

As a practical inference from the fallacy of human judgment, whether having ourselves or other men for its object, the Apostle, with reference to the *latter* case,

gives us the charge, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

It is hardly necessary to point out those limitations with which the charge must be understood, to judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come. Men are called upon officially to investigate, to pronounce upon the conduct of others, and to deal with them accordingly. And, in ordinary life, we witness familiar exemplifications of what the Apostle tells us, that "some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment." These are evidently cases which do not fall within the prohibition of the text; but even in these we should exercise a spirit of charity and allowance, a spirit which rejoiceth not in iniquity. And in all that immense range which is taken by our judgments, extending itself over the diversified field of religion, politics, common transactions of the day, common social intercourse, mutual relations in life,—we should carry about with us the spirit of charitable construction, which "hopeth all things, and believeth all things." We should, in this point, as in others, equip ourselves for travelling through this thorny world, by "having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." We should remember that we are the disciples of One Whose own characteristic it was, that He did "not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears;" and Whose injunctions are in our hands, "Judge not, that ye be not

judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned;" and again, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." Appearance how often deceitful, and injuriously deceitful, yet how often, in a manner, greedily laid hold of, to gratify the malice or to furnish food for the mere gossip of the world! How often are false impressions thus propagated abroad, to the prejudice of our fellow-creatures, left perhaps for ever uncorrected in this world; or like the formal proceedings of some foreign tribunals, in times which have gone by,* corrected by a tardy justice rendered to the memory of those who suffered all their lives under misrepresentation. And in how many ways do men misjudge each other! how unadvisedly, how rashly, do they pronounce by tests established within their own party, upon the spiritual state and safety of their brethren!

"Thinkest thou," says our Apostle in addressing the Romans, "thou that judgest another, thinkest thou that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" "Judge nothing before the time," then, "until the Lord come." Leave it to Him, in all cases which admit of doubt, to "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and to make manifest the counsels of the heart." "For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth." "But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?" O think, then, brethren, upon your own preparation; look into your own hearts, consciences, and lives; forbear to judge other men, but in this sense do

* See the *Causes célèbres.* These reversals, however, were after the infliction of death itself; at least in many, if not all, of the cases.

judge yourselves, that ye be not judged of the Lord. If you have fought a good fight, if you are in the way rightly to finish your course, if you have kept the faith, preserved unblemished the faith which looks to Christ, and Christ alone for salvation, then judgment is nothing terrible to you. Then you will be numbered among those who, whatever may have been the judgment passed upon them in the world, will have praise of God, your poor services being accepted in the Beloved. Then you will love His appearing, and in and through Him you will receive the crown of righteousness, and enter upon the "inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

SERMON III.

THE BURDEN OF DUMAH.

ISAIAH XXI. 11, 12.

The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?
The Watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.

THE prophetic denunciation of heavy judgments from the hand of God is familiarly called in Scripture a *burden* —as when Jehu, the appointed instrument of executing the divine purpose against the house of Ahab, having shot King Jehoram, commands Bidkar, his captain, to take him up and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth, the Jezreelite. For remember, he adds, "how that when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the Lord laid this *burden* upon him,"—namely, that the blood of Naboth should be requited in this plat. And thus in the continuous utterance of prophecy after prophecy, against many cities and countries, we have as the introductory title in the several cases, the *burden* of Moab, the *burden* of Damascus, the *burden* of Egypt, the *burden* of the Valley of Vision, *i.e.* of Jerusalem, the scene of many visions, occupying a valley among the mountains, and the *burden* of other places. In the midst of this catalogue stands *the burden of Dumah,*—

manifestly the same place, in such variation of the word as constantly occurs in proper names, as *Idumea* or *Edom*, the seat of the posterity of Esau, since the voice of enquiry is immediately said to proceed from the mountains of *Seir*, where Esau himself had planted the race. "He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?"

The watchman set upon the tower to report the motions of the enemy, and to sound an alarm upon the approach of danger, represents here, as in other places, the messenger of God commissioned to warn a thoughtless and guilty world. The Edomites, involved in gloomy circumstances, and not knowing what mischiefs may be coming upon them in the darkness of the future—or, as others explain it, referring scornfully to the situation and prospects of the people of God, to whom they stood in the relation of hereditary enemies,—are pictured as enquiring from the watchman the news of the night. To this enquiry the answer is made, "The morning cometh and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come,"—words which may be understood in some such way as this: you seem to be full of anxious curiosity in the night, and you are looking for morning; the morning will come, and another night will follow; but both may be alike charged with perils; if you are sincere in seeking instruction, and seek it in order to being guided by it, *return* to the God of Israel, Whom you have deserted, and *come* to the fountain of hope and mercy; or thus, *Come again*,* if

* Old translation.

you now enquire in a proper and humble spirit, and you shall then have a favourable answer.

This is perhaps as correct an explanation as we are able to give of the original meaning of a passage which is not without its obscurity. Let us now consider it in that allowable adaptation of which it is susceptible to our own case and the general case of mankind, and see whether it will not suggest some train of thought which is appropriate to the present season of the ecclesiastical year, in which we are specially reminded to seek the grace of God, that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light.

We who stand at the altar and occupy the pulpit are, without any pretensions to the prophetic character, in the Scriptural language of our own Ordination Service, the messengers, stewards, and *watchmen* of the Lord. And we hold our station in a world which by nature lieth in *darkness* and the shadow of death. The morning cometh. We descry and we proclaim Him Who, in His own words, is the bright and morning star, and the light of the world; Who is also described as the Sun of Righteousness Who arises with healing in His wings radiant with open mercy and wide-spread love, and at once sheltering and vivifying a sickened world. Men want to know something about God and the world unseen. They must have a religion of some sort, and false religions, we know, have been invented for them, without end, to meet this innate desire. They grope about for some assurance; they catch at what can be gathered from others, in the dimness and incertitude

with which they are surrounded; they ask the watchman, whoever he may be, or however accredited, what of the night? what of the night? But alas! if the true light be brought fairly to shine upon them, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, how often is it seen that they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil! how gladly they run again under the refuge of error and the veil of the covering cast over the surface of all things, and concealing their true features! "For whatsoever doth make manifest is light," and the Gospel of salvation, beaming as it does with goodness and mercy, *makes most painfully manifest*, in order to our appreciation and acceptance of its remedies and blessings, the character of the world, the case of human nature before God, and the state of the human heart. It pours into every crook and every corner its strong and searching rays, and discloses the bias to evil which lurks in endless shapes in the bosom of man, and the long accumulation of errors and deviations which stamp their character upon his life. It detects all the subtle disguises of self-love, and unravels the complicated intricacies of sin. It sets in view what men ought to be, in broad and undeniable contrast with what they are. It shows them that their *first* duty is to honour their Father which is in Heaven, to do His will upon earth, to walk in His ways, to live, since He graciously invites them to do so, in His company, and to acquaint themselves more and more with His love; and it convinces them of the averseness of their hearts from all this; the ingratitude, the coldness, the obdu-

racy, the undutifulness, the direct, flagrant, repeated disobedience of which they have been guilty towards Him; their proneness to lose sight of their responsibilities here and of their destiny hereafter—their unprepared condition to meet the questions which He puts to them: "If I be a father, where is mine honour? If I be a master, where is my fear?" It exposes the real hideousness and horror of vices and excesses and acts of profaneness at which the world is but too ready to connive; the vanity and littleness and utter frivolity of objects upon which the foolish heart of man is eagerly set, or with which his mental capacities are filled even to distention. It indicates the base immersion of souls formed for the hope of immortality, in the cares and the riches and the pleasures of this perishable life; the waste of existence, the unprofitable service, the hiding of the talent, the prostitution, to other ends, of precious gifts bestowed to promote the glory of God and the good of mankind; the degenerate abandonment either to indolent self-indulgence or to a restless activity in worldly pleasures, of beings who, redeemed by the blood of Christ, ought to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is their reasonable service. It betrays to the sight, in their proper malignity, the nest of vipers which poison the vitals of the moral part,—the dark, the impure, and the violent passions of nature in all their several exemplifications. It shows the identity of indulged sin in the heart, and sin tangibly developed in the outward act; it exhibits the fallacies which men put upon themselves, the

hollowness of their excuses for the neglect of duty, their vain and destructive self-complacency, their false self-attribution of goodness in actions prompted by motives of an earthly cast, the worthlessness and hypocrisy of all their professions and all their doings in religion itself, if actuated by a spirit of strife and vain-glory, or unaccompanied by a Christian temper and a conscientious discharge of common, and perhaps uninviting duties. It presents man, in short, as wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked—wanting mercy, and wanting all—having neither hope nor resource in himself; so constituted within and so acted upon from without, as constantly to require the exercise of watchfulness and self-denial, and force put upon his nature in order to his preserving the way of happiness and safety even for this present life; and yet without strength of his own to resist the impulse of appetite and passion, or the seductions which lie as snares in his path. All this the light of the Gospel will discover, and thence it is unwelcome to corrupted nature; it is coupled with great humiliation of soul; it implies the sacrifice of what men naturally love, and it carries alarms to their bosoms in the height of the good, easy condition in which, for anything that they are aware of, they may perfectly well allow themselves to rest. Light, therefore, they do not like, for they do not want to be disturbed; and the compensations, the comforts of the Gospel, the abundance of its blessings, the fitness of its provisions for the case of human nature, the fulness of its love, the glory of its hopes, these they scarcely look

at, because the feature of the system which catches their attention is that they must take up their cross.

But let us set the words which we have been considering in another point of view. "The morning cometh, and also the night." The morning of life opens freshly and fairly to many among us. We do not anticipate the clouds and changes which may be at hand, and, in this stage of our existence, we are not apt to think of its *noon* or its *decline*. Far less do we generally think of the *night*. But the night cometh—the night when no man can work; and in *every* stage of our existence, after we have once reached the power of thought, we ought to think of this. Our day upon earth is passing very fast; the day of hundreds whom we have known familiarly in life, has been brought to its close before our eyes; they have disappeared in darkness, their bed is the grave, they sleep the sleep of death, their place is nowhere found among living men. Have *we*, then, my my brethren, any patent of exemption from the same summons, any privilege of survivorship to be prolonged at our own pleasure, that we seem, in so many examples, to be living for this world, as if in an assured perpetuity of enjoyment, and looking for nothing beyond? sailing on with all security of feeling and carelessness of pride upon the ocean of life—

> "Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
> That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening prey"?

How many professed Christians do we see—men who, in virtue of that profession, are called upon to redeem

the time because the days are evil,—either getting rid of what, it seems, are the superfluities of their time in a lounging kind of existence, by expedients which serve to beguile them of the way, or scheming with all the stretch of their understandings, and toiling with all the devotedness of their hearts, and striving with all the energies which God has conferred upon them, in the traffic, the tumults, and the competitions of the world; not utterly neglectful of religious performance, not setting at nought the decorum of moral observance, nor refusing some measure of aid in objects of charity, but failing to be rich towards God; laying up no treasure in heaven; recognising no such principles, in affection or in practice, although they do not repudiate them in theory, as that the life which we live in the flesh we should live by the faith of the Son of God; and that He having died for all, we who live again through that death, ought not henceforth to live unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again.

My brethren, let us learn what we are here for, and what we have to do. Let us, in imitation of our Divine Master, work the works of Him that sent us into the world while it is day, and remember that "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither" we are going. "And if ye will enquire, enquire ye." I do not now advert to the case of scepticism: if men have doubts as to the truth of our holy religion, and make *that* a subject of enquiry, let them enquire. We invite them to do so, and will give them, upon due occasion, all the help of which God may

permit us to be the instruments. But, passing by this case, if your attention is arrested, if your curiosity is excited, if your interest is awakened in any way upon the subject of religion—if you think it a duty to attend upon the instruction of her ministers, do not stop there; follow up the movement to better purpose; think of your own souls; enquire ye into their state before God; examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Did Christ die for you? Is it so, or is it not? Enquire into that. If it *is* so, is that a reality to be left lying, as it were, in the lumber-room of our memories, while all the occupied chambers of thought and feeling are filled with the comparative nothings of this world; and all the stir and movement within us have no reference whatever to Him Who suffered on the cross, no glance at the cause and the object of those sufferings? Can we be safe? Can we hope to be happy in the end, if, with the knowledge of such facts before us as those which are recorded in the Gospel, and of all the consequences dependent upon those facts, as well as the exigency on the part of men which led the way to them, we remain unmoved and unconcerned, affected in no different manner, prompted to no different course of action, from what might have been seen in us if we had never heard of a Saviour at all, and the need of a Saviour had never once been suggested to our minds?

"If ye will enquire," then, "enquire ye: return, come." "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you: for I am

merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." Will you deny this? Put aside man and the opinions of man, and the countenance, the example, the influence of man; the habits of thinking among men; cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils; bring yourself into contact with the all-holy God. Will you deny that you have sinned against Him? will you say that you do not want to be forgiven? Oh! rather you will say, if you can see yourself as you are, that you have sinned, you have done amiss, you have dealt wickedly; that your sins are more in number than the hairs of your head; that they have taken such hold upon you, that you are not able to look up, and that your heart hath failed you; rather you will smite upon your breast, without daring so much as to lift up your eyes unto heaven, and will say, God be merciful to me a sinner! And then the promises of grace and mercy are your own. Then, when you arise and go unto your Father, and say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son, your face being turned homeward once more, He sees you while you are yet a great way off, and He opens His arms to clasp you to the bosom of fatherly forgiveness and love. "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. . . . . I will heal their backsliding: I will love them freely." "Return, come." "*Return* unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon" you, "and to our God, for He will abundantly

pardon." "*Come,* for all things are now ready." "*Come* unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "The Spirit and the bride say, *Come.*" The Lord invites you by the inspiration of His Word and the influences of His grace; and the Church, by His command, echoes the invitation. "And let him that is athirst *come.* And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

SERMON IV.

THE UNPRODUCTIVE VINEYARD.

ISAIAH v. 1.

Now will I sing to My Well-beloved a song of my Beloved touching His vineyard.

THERE are very many passages in the Old and New Testaments, in which the responsibility both of individuals and of communities, in proportion to the advantages bestowed upon them, is pictured, in warning representations, before our eyes, and often under familiar imagery like that of our text. As, for example, where the unfruitful fig-tree is condemned to excision, but the stroke is stayed at the plea of the vine-dresser till yet a farther trial, with farther care and culture, shall have been afforded,—the limit, however, of one more year being fixed, after which, in the event of making no return, it is to be abandoned to the sentence of destruction without reprieve. Again, where the whole nation of the Jews, with their teachers in religion at their head, are figured forth, in their treatment of the prophets and wise men sent successively among them, and, finally, of the Son of God Himself, as the husbandmen to whom the vineyard was let out, the distant lord of that property, deputing His messengers one after another, and closing the list with His only and well-beloved Son, in order to demand an account of the

fruit. The conduct of these husbandmen, and the doom pronounced against them, cannot fail to be familiarly remembered. The parable came very home to the hearers of Christ, and He appears to have spoken it not without reference to that which the prophet had addressed, in an age then long gone by, to their forefathers: "Now will I sing to My Well-beloved a song of My Beloved touching His vineyard." Christ is the *Well-beloved* of His Father; Christ is the Well-beloved of His spouse the Church, when she is faithful to her obligations. It is the Jewish Church which is here represented as the vineyard. The signal advantages enjoyed by that Church are thus portrayed:—

"My Well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it" (as a residence for the keepers), "and also made a winepress therein." All needful provision was fully made, and all wise precaution was carefully taken. God had fixed His earthly seat upon the hill of Zion, and called the surrounding country His own; He had fenced off His chosen people from a corrupted world by a law from heaven, by statutes and ordinances, and by miraculous protection openly and gloriously displayed in their behalf: He had removed the obstructions which stood in their way from contact with idolaters; He had planted the vine among them which was designed to be incorporated with Christ Himself, the vine transplanted from heaven; He had made Jerusalem a place of strength and of glory, mani-

festing His presence by visible symbols in the temple, and had furnished all the apparatus required for dispensing, in the richest overflow, the blessings of His covenant to the people. To them "pertained the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises." The advantage of the Jew and the profit of circumcision were "much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

The Lord, therefore, looked,—and it was surely very natural and reasonable that He should do so,—that the vineyard should bring forth grapes. But it produced nothing but wild and worthless fruit. He then, in His supreme condescension,—as in other instances, and particularly where He says, through the prophet Micah, that He will plead with Israel, and asks of His people what He has done unto them, and wherein He has wearied them,—puts the case to themselves: "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?" There is no answer to this appeal. Every mouth is stopped before God. He is justified in His saying, and clear when He is judged. And therefore His righteous wrath must have its course. The example must be shown that a wicked abuse of mercies and blessings cannot go unpunished. "And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden

down. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." How literally, in some particulars, this sentence against the vineyard was executed in successive judgments upon the city and territory of Jerusalem; how, in the figurative aspect of the description, she has remained since her last overthrow, century after century, trodden down of the Gentiles, and the showers of the Divine grace and blessing have been withheld from the hardened soil of her people's hearts,—these are things which it needs not to point out. God only take compassion upon her in His appointed time, and give her abundantly beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning, when the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled!

In the meantime, let us apply the lesson to ourselves. Has God done less for us than He did, under the old dispensation, for the Jews? Can we indicate any deficiency, complain of any hardship, point out anything more which might have been done for the vineyard now, which He has not done unto it? Has He not given for us His only-begotten Son? Has He not promised the succours of His Divine Spirit? Has He not engaged to give a new heart to the house of Israel, and to write His law with His own finger in their minds? Has He not rained upon them freely, on all sides, the manna of His holy word? Has He not furnished directions to find the way of life, which he may run that readeth? Has He not acted by glorious prospects upon human hope, by awful yet affectionate warnings upon human fear, by

immeasurable goodness upon human love? Has He not fenced the vineyard, and built the tower, and made the wine-press therein—a ministry being provided in perpetuity, a Church founded immovably upon a rock, sacraments appointed and ordinances established; so that all is complete and ready "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ?" And has He not, in our own particular case (let us speak it not boastingly, but tremblingly), most eminently blessed the English Church and nation,—calling us out from a state of darkness and religious corruption; preserving to us, at the same time, the ancient model of church government, the primitive usages of worship, and the transmitted line of the ministry from the beginning?—raising up for us, also, holy champions of the faith, who, "for the testimony of Jesus, loved not their lives unto the death," with a long catalogue of doctors, pastors, and teachers, not surpassed among uninspired men?—farther still, making our country, crowned as she is by a commanding influence, and armed with seemingly inexhaustible resources, the steward, in a manner, for the world, of that light, liberty, and still advancing civilization, for which she is herself so conspicuously distinguished? What more could have been done for the vineyard which the Lord has not done unto it? Testify against Him, if you have any grievance, any omission to represent.

My brethren, if all these blessings have been made ours, let us, individually and collectively, remember the principle, that "unto whomsoever much is given, of him

shall be much required." We are answerable before God for the full improvement of our privileges. We must render the due return of fruit, or we must expect the sentence which impends over unfruitfulness. But, in order to come rather more closely and familiarly to the point, let us select for our consideration, by way of example, some of the principal sins and deficiencies which, after his song touching the vineyard, are charged by the prophet upon the Jews; and wherever we find any approximation, any tendency to these or similar sins among ourselves, there let us seriously, deeply, earnestly bewail our own sinfulness, and, by God's own gracious help, forsake our evil habits, and thoroughly amend our ways and our doings. Let us turn unto the Lord, that He may have mercy upon us, and to our God, that He may abundantly pardon.

The first woe which is denounced in the chapter under consideration is against a grasping avarice and selfish spirit of aggrandizement, labouring intently in the accumulation of property. It is powerfully expressed in the language of amplification. "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!"

Now, in a country and in a community like this in which our lot is cast, where men gifted with enterprise, sagacity, and perseverance have many facilities for pushing their way in the world, and most men, in entering upon life, have their own fortunes to make, there are snares spread in this manner for the soul. There is danger that, in such circumstances as these, a suc-

cessful industry, a watchful attention to business, a practised eye for advantageous speculation, will so complicate the web of worldly affairs, and so absorb the attention and energy and attention of the mind, as to leave neither interval nor activity of spirit for the service of God. The world, it is too often found, has drunk up the cup—the dregs only are left for Heaven. Yet the man has an immortal soul: his stake is in eternity, forgotten eternity: death will soon cut short his earthly calculations: after death he has an account to render and a judgment to abide: salvation or perdition must be his portion for ever: salvation it cannot be, if he has not lived for God upon earth: hope cannot be in his end nor happiness beyond it, if he has overlooked his high destiny; if he has not been awakened to a care for his everlasting interests; if he has not loved the Saviour Who died for him; if he has never demeaned himself, never even regarded himself as a child of God; or if he has not used the good things of life as a trust which he is responsible above; if, with means put into his hands of doing good in his generation, he has failed to be fruitful in good works. It is not necessary to suppose that he has been guilty of direct fraud or oppression, or even that he has found it convenient, in the traffic of the world, to discard some nicer scruples of a conscientious integrity, and quietly to take some advantages which may be varnished over by smoother names than they deserve, or to practise some petty deceptions not unusual, and therefore apt to be considered not illicit. Neither is it necessary to suppose

that he has so openly, as well as so devotedly, idolized Mammon as to have renounced all decent attention to the stated external duties of religion, or shaken off all thought of religion within the privacy of his own breast. Neither is it necessary to suppose that he has hoarded up his gains with a penurious hand and brooded over them with a miserly jealousy in the dark: his maxim may rather have been that of the rich man in the Gospel, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry."

Such cases as we have here successively specified, although they may very well occur, are what it is not necessary to suppose. It is enough to ask such questions as these:—Where is his heart? Where is his treasure truly laid up? What is his habitual preparation to meet the face of God? his actual readiness to answer the summons, if it should come, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee;" his willingness and fitness of heart to say with the holy Psalmist, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for THOU art with me"?

The danger of striving and toiling for earthly gain, to the neglect of the *one thing needful* for man—of serving the world instead of serving God, is a danger by no means confined to those who live already in some measure of affluence, and can indulge in the exhibition of some worldly style. The sons of industry occupying the lower walks of life, who avail themselves of the openings of a new country to rise, step after step, above

their original condition, and to whom prospects more extended still develop themselves as they rise,—such persons, although their exertions, favourably contrasted, in many instances, with the drone-like self-indulgence of inherited wealth and station, ought not certainly to be repressed, nor their desire for the improvement of their circumstances to be discouraged,—such persons are as liable as any to incur the danger of being engrossed by the world. The prophet, in his denunciation of judgments, declares in one part of the chapter, that "the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled." And so, on the *other* hand, there is a class of sins of which the coarser and more revolting exhibitions to be witnessed among the lowest orders of society, might prompt us to fancy that there is nothing in common with them, in this point, in those circles which make any pretension to respectability and refinement; "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them." This is not a description of the modern habits of polite society, and, whatever we may be inclined to think of the safe and durable operation of schemes for a great moral renovation among mankind which are based upon a pledge given to man by those who disregard their anterior pledges to God, it is at least certain, and we may be thankful to witness it, that in the inferior gradations of life, some present and partial check, sufficiently marked, has been put upon habits of intemperance. Yet enough of them in hideous

shapes remains. And let all who indulge in them remember that no drunkard shall "inherit the kingdom of God." But, that we may not lose sight of those who, from their position in society, are less in danger of low excesses and who duly observe the restraints of propriety, let us follow the prophet to the end of his woe: "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands."

Now we know very well, from the highest possible examples and authorities in the word of God, that neither wine, nor cheerful music, nor attendance at the festive table, is a thing sinful in itself. But, this being understood, are there no instances in which such liberty is too largely taken or too manifestly abused? Are there none among the children of fashion, among the votaries of gaiety, far removed either from the scenes of vulgar uproar and disgusting excess, or from any destructive habit of recourse privately and, as it were, in the dark, to the stimulants of strong drink, to whom the latter part of the prophetic description will apply? Look at the correct, the respectable company of this world: are there none who, living in plenty, in elegance, in varied pleasure, and in studied amusement from day to day, shut out all homefelt thought of their God and shun all devout and spiritual contemplation—listless in every performance of religion—strangers to repentance—

stupid in faith—and aliens in heart from the cross of Jesus Christ?

Let them be warned, for woe has gone out against them from God.

Woe is denounced also against them "that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope," twining together, as it were, their fabric of fallacies which they have spun out to strengthen themselves in their wickedness, and saying, in the words which follow, "Let Him make speed and hasten His work that we may see it, and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come that we may know it." These are infatuated beings of the same stamp spoken of by King Solomon, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil;" and akin to the scoffers of the last days described by St. Peter as "walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." And are there no scoffers now? Are there none who make light of that glorious truth of God which is described as a voice shaking the heavens and the earth? Are there none who are regardless of judgment, and if they think of it at all, think of it as something so far off that they need not much concern themselves about it now, abusing the long sufferance of their God and treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of that righteous judgment to come? Or are there none now who draw

iniquity with cords of vanity—who cloak their sins by a delusive sophistry, and fortify their evil practice by a recourse to maxims accommodated to their wishes—farther and more fully characterized, under a separate denunciation of woe, as those "who call evil good, and good evil, who put darkness for light, and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter"? Alas! what a familiar artifice of the world, and how powerful a spell in the hands of the enemy of souls, is this method of falsely colouring the actions of men, and inverting the true notions of unchangeable right and wrong! Holiness is accounted hypocrisy—humility is meanness of spirit—uncompromising honesty of principle is needless and troublesome preciseness—revenge is honourable—unyielding pride is spirit and dignity of mind—a little profaneness, a little irregularity in morals, a little extravagance without the means of supporting it, a little indulgence in show and vanity and pleasure, at the expense of industrious tradesmen who live, and, perhaps, struggle to give bread to their families, by supplying the fancies of luxury;—these are the pardonable peccadilloes of a good-hearted man—they do not detract from his bearing or his standing as a gentleman—they are borne with, they are connived at by many decent Christians of the world—and with some companions he is rather graced by them than otherwise—nay, with some, "whose glory is in their shame," they actually constitute his special merit.

What is he in the eye of God? and what is the effect of these things upon the state and safety of his soul?

Finally, woe is denounced against those who are "wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight."

A good deal might here be said respecting the dangers incident to some of the very blessings, signal as they are, of the age in which we live: the great advance and the more general diffusion of science, the immense pains taken, and the prodigious facilities afforded for circulating all kinds of information through all kinds of channels, among all kinds of people,—all these have a tendency, if not counter-worked by a holy influence, to engender a pride of intellect, hard and presumptuous in its character, in the leaders of the movement, as well as unwholesome and distempered conceit in the popular mind. Waiving, however, this application of the words (for it is time to pass to the high celebration which is here this day prepared), let us simply consider them as impressing upon us, generally, the necessity, the awful and imperious necessity, of our coming with a humble and teachable heart before our God. Let us learn, my brethren, if we have not yet learned it, to "cast down imaginations and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," and to "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save" our souls. Let us become fools that we may be wise: divest ourselves of a carping, captious, and misleading philosophy, when we come to be taught in the school of Christ. The wisdom which He imparts is not "the wisdom of this world." The things which

are hid from the wise and prudent are things which the Father reveals, in all their fulness and reality, to babes. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

SERMON V.

COMPLIANCE WITH ORDINANCES.*

NAHUM I. 15.

Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace. O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts: perform thy vows.

IN ancient times of warfare, and in scenes then occurring of trouble and dismay, the watchman was stationed upon the mountains, commanding a view, perhaps, of some battle-field where host had closed with host, and the fate of a nation was staked upon the issue; or simply keeping a look-out for any movement affecting the public interest. From thence he despatched his tidings in all haste, to those who waited for them in anxious expectation, if not in trembling suspense. And right welcome were the feet of the messengers who brought the news of victory or rescue, or who could, at last, promise a happy cessation of any galling oppressions and harassing alarms.

The feet or steps of messengers upon the mountains became hence, apparently, a sort of proverbial phrase, to denote the transmission of intelligence; and the particular news of comfort and joy to which reference is made in the text are conceived to have been the destruction, by the angel of death, of the vast army of Sennacherib, in the days of king Hezekiah, consequent

* Preached on Christmas Day.

upon which was the deliverance of Jerusalem and her people from a siege in which their case had appeared desperate. In the terrors of this siege they had made many vows before God, and these they are charged by the prophet to remember. There is a closely similar passage in the fifty-second chapter of the Prophet Isaiah, referring, in its original application, to the decree of Cyrus for ending the captivity in Babylon, rebuilding the temple, and restoring the holy city, but prospectively enveloping a far higher meaning. We see it applied by St. Paul, in the tenth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, to the proclamation of the Gospel abroad over the world, by the heralds of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It cannot require to be pointed out that the opening words of our text are susceptible of the same sacred application, and that they harmonize in a very exact manner with the object of this day's celebration in the Church. They find their echo in the voice of the angels lifted in chorus at the birth of our blessed Redeemer. "Behold," says the prophet, "behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth *good tidings*, that publisheth *peace*." "And suddenly," says the evangelist, "there was with the angel (the single angel who had made the announcement to the shepherds of *good tidings* of great joy) a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth *peace*, good will towards men."

We then who, unworthy as we are to be door-keepers in the house of our God, are the watchmen of Israel, and the messengers upon the mountains,—we who carry

the commission of Christ,—we bring *good tidings*, and we publish *peace*. But to whom do we address our good tidings? to whom do we make these gracious overtures on behalf of God? To all, my brethren, who are reached by our individually appointed ministrations. "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the *Gospel* (which word, as is well known, is precisely equivalent to *good tidings*), to *every creature*." But do these tidings, in effect, prove good to all? Alas! no. They have not all, as the Apostle says to the Romans, in the use which he makes of the passage from Isaiah, "they have not all obeyed the Gospel." And whose fault is that? Was it the fault of Christ that, when He came to His own, His own received Him not? Did He place them, or did He leave them, under an inability to profit by the calls of mercy? Let His own words testify:—"Ye *will not* come to Me, that ye might have life." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and *ye would not!* Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." And so of *peace:* Christ makes our peace with God, He imparts peace and joy in believing; His Gospel breathes nothing but peace and love; His special bequest to His disciples runs in the words, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Yet what is His own declaration respecting the effects which He foresaw from the preaching of the Gospel to a perverse, rebellious world? "Suppose ye

that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you nay, but rather division." It is a truth which has the air of paradox, that the very condition in man which creates the want of the Gospel, is that which prompts his resistance of the Gospel. The corruption of his nature demands that twofold exercise of grace which is found in redemption by the blood of Christ, and renovation of heart by the Divine Spirit: these are freely tendered, but he clings to his corruption; his sins are dear to him; his pride enlists itself on the same side; the world sees him her willing slave, although it is a slavery which will sink him in perdition; the flesh draws him, a yielding victim, to the indulgence of a false and deceitful happiness which will be fatal to his soul; and the cross, which is his only cure, is what he repels from him with impatience and distaste.

My brethren, what are we here for to-day? We are here to hail, with prostrate adoration and fervent thankfulness of heart, the Redeemer Who came among us as a lowly child. We are here to declare before God Himself and the world, our acceptance, our appropriation, with deep humility, as well as with devout out-pourings of gratitude, of the good tidings of great joy and the proclamation of peace, with which the arch of heaven was made to ring at the birth of the Virgin's Child in the stable. O let it not be said—tell it not in Gath—publish it not in the streets of Askelon—that too many of us have neither part nor lot in this wonder of divine love! If we do not feel those wants of the human soul before God which find their relief in Christ, and in

Christ alone, then what can we possibly have to do with the joy of Christmas? Let us think of our destiny, let us look into our preparation, let us become sensible of our own nakedness, let us have recourse to Christ that He may cover us, let us practically learn what it means to be justified by faith, and so to have *peace* with God by Jesus Christ—peace through the blood of His cross; it is then that we shall be fully qualified to *keep the solemn feast* for which we are here met, and which the Church has appointed as a help to our edification and devotion.

"O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts; perform thy vows." This refers, of course, to the stated feasts or religious festivals and other ordinances subsisting under the Law. And, under the Gospel, it can only apply in its spirit, and not according to the Jewish letter. Yet it is very obviously and properly capable of adaptation to the external institutions of the Christian religion, and to the course of observances prescribed in any particular branch of the Church.

The rites and ceremonies of the Law were designed for one people and for a limited duration. They were emblematical of better things to come, and were prescribed with a minuteness, and tied down to an undeviating form of celebration, which did not suit the expansive and, in the proper sense of the word, the *catholic* character of the Gospel.

There must, however, under every system, be ordinances and observances to constitute the marks and badges of the worshippers of God, and the tokens of

their covenant with Him; to assist in maintaining and perpetuating the sense of religion among mankind, and to hold men together in faith and devotional homage These ordinances and observances, in the day of the Gospel, may be classed under three different heads:—

First, those which are of distinct, express, and positive *institution* by the authority of God, as the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Secondly, those which are handed down to us by that Apostolic tradition of which mention is made by St. Paul, being so far noticed in Scripture, *without* positive *institution*, as to satisfy us, when such notice is compared with the early, universal, and continued practice of Christians, that they were delivered down by the Apostles of the Lord: and to this class we must assign the observance of the first day of the week, in substitution for the last; the admission of infants as subjects for the Sacrament of Baptism; and, we may properly add, the practice of Confirmation, which the Church, in the form of administration, declares to be kept in use "after the example of the holy Apostles."

Thirdly, those which are based purely upon ecclesiastical authority, and are described in the thirty-fourth of our own Articles of Religion as the traditions and ceremonies of the Church; and these, as is there shown, are susceptible of change and of local variety. They must be taken to comprehend the particular manner of celebration (in points which are not of the essence of the ordinance), and the mere circumstantial appen-

dages belonging to those observances which fall under the two former heads.

Among the ordinances thus classified, there are some Christians, as the Quakers or Society of Friends, who repudiate the two sacraments; a very few, as for example, the Seventh-day Baptists, reject the observance of the first day of the week; the Baptists at large, or, as they are more distinguishingly described, the Anti-pædo-Baptists (*i.e.* the opposers of the baptism of children), withhold baptism from infants; and some few of the reformed National Churches, together with all the sects of dissenters (though not, as I have seen occasion at different times to notice, without confessions here and there, in strong language, of an error in having done so), have dropped the rite of Confirmation.

With these exceptions, the ordinances which we have ranged under the two first heads are received universally among professed Christians, including the unreformed portion of the Church, in which it is well known that additions have been made to the number of the sacraments, as also that observances which rest simply upon ecclesiastical authority, and too many of which are irreconcileable with the Word of God, are placed upon a level with divine institutions.

Respecting these merely ecclesiastical regulations and appointments, it is sufficiently agreed, at least among all the more enlightened followers of the Reformation, that (so far as essential principle is involved) they are left freely to the discretion of public authority in the Church in this or that country, with no other restrictions

than that nothing be admitted which is contrary to God's Word, that "all things be done decently and in order," and that every rule and observance be framed in a manner subservient to edification, as well as to the due preservation of reverence in the solemnities of worship. It is only by a combination of the extremes of fanaticism and ignorance, that men can be led to suppose everything to be unlawful in the exterior appointments of public worship which is not laid down in so many words in the Gospel; and, in truth, as there is nothing laid down there at all upon the subject, the effect of such a principle, consistently carried out, would be to put an end to public worship altogether.

It is the part of wisdom, also, to pay much respectful regard, in these matters, to the ascertained usage of pure ecclesiastical antiquity, as well as to avoid giving any needless shock to national customs and hereditary associations or attachments. There are customs, usages, and conventional demonstrations by exterior signs, immemorially and uninterruptedly associated in the Christian Church with devotional sentiment and feeling, which are of affinity with the proceeding of that multitude who strewed the road of the Saviour with branches and spread their garments in His way, or with other exterior manifestations of affection and reverence for His person, which we will not stay now to particularize, but which we know to have found acceptance in His sight. And we should do undeniable prejudice to the character and tone of our religion if we were to lop away, with an unsparing sternness, every

ancient observance which may be open to the cavils of utilitarian criticism.

In the train of our subject, as suggested by the text, it is to the ecclesiastical appointment of certain commemorative days or seasons that our attention is more particularly directed. And here we will say at once, that we do not judge another man's servant. The days which we thus regard, we regard, as we trust, unto the Lord; if there are others who do not regard them, we believe that, in the omission of that regard, they equally, in their own way of service, have regard unto the Lord also. But in the quality of Church-members, we are not free to take the same dispensation for ourselves; and if we would follow the example of Christ, Who insisted upon punctually fulfilling in His own person all ceremonial as well as all other righteousness, and Who countenanced the observance of festivals which were simply of human institution, we shall admit it to be the part of duty to *keep our own solemn feasts*, and religiously to improve for ourselves the particular system of observances with which we are connected and concerned. We are not to decry and disparage everything which does not happen to resemble our own mode of provision for religious homage; we are not to maintain that no way can be good but our own, or that nothing could be made better among us when the experiment of change can be safely tried; but having our own, we are to use it, to turn it to account for our own advancement in holiness. And certainly the appointments of the Church afford us, in themselves, a singularly well-

digested series of opportunities for such advancement. Her services are so arranged and distributed as to act like prompters to us in the subjects of Christian devotion or instruction throughout the whole of our ecclesiastical year, which thus presents an epitome of the Gospel.

The season of Advent is a prelude to the celebration of the coming of Christ in the flesh, and brings before us the introductory ministry of St. John the Baptist, with warnings of preparation for the second advent of the Lord. The birth, the circumcision, the temptation, and other marked particulars in the history of our Lord, are statedly and specially commemorated, till at last we reach the crisis—the week in which He suffered, the day on which He died,—the interval in which the tomb still held Him,—the bursting of that prison, by His own Divine power, which speedily followed, and His appearance among His followers as a living man, the living man Christ Jesus, again—His triumphant ascension in the clouds of heaven—His glorious execution of promise in shedding down upon the heads of the Apostles the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. Thus it is that all the grand points of that wonderful tale which relates to our redemption are, year by year, made prominently familiar to us, and kept in their vivid reality before our eyes: none of them, even in the most dim and cloudy ages of the Church, none of them can escape us. And thus, with the help of a thoroughly scriptural liturgy, and the constant public reading of the word of God itself, together with the special appointment of a

Sunday in honour of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, we seem to enjoy every provision and every guard which the wisdom of man could devise, or his piety could prompt, to preserve us, amid all the fluctuations and irregularities of religious opinion which succeed each other in the world, in the practice of an intelligently spiritual devotion, and the exercise of a sound belief. Nor can it, I believe, be questioned either that these advantages, enjoyed by ourselves, have spread a beneficial influence far beyond the immediate circle of our own communion; or that many a careless sinner, bred within that circle, has, by these means, laid up, with no thanks to himself, a treasure of Christian truth and a fund of scriptural knowledge, for which, in the hour of subsequent conversion to God, he has had cause to bless the provident care of the Church.

Again, we are repeatedly charged in the word of God to set before our eyes, as models, the holy servants of God in ancient times, and the primitive founders of our religion: as when St. Paul, after his enumeration of special instances exemplifying the power of faith, calls upon us to take pattern from so great a cloud of witnesses; or when St. James says to us, "Take, my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience." The Church, therefore, is precisely transfusing these principles into her worship, when she establishes certain minor festivals in commemoration of the labours or the martyrdom of the holy Apostles and other champions of the cross, who held some special post in

the service, as recorded in the books of the New Testament itself.

The observances of Passion-week, Easter, Ascension-day, and Whitsuntide, occur on the real anniversaries of the events which they commemorate, for there were events in the history of Christ which, in the vast and connected chain of Providence, were ordained to coincide, in point of the precise time of year, with certain stated Jewish observances, by which they had been foreshadowed. The festivals which have been just enumerated, together with that of Christmas, are all observed by the Protestant national Churches of continental Europe, and many of the most eloquent sermons of foreign Protestant divines are compositions prepared for those special occasions. Of Christmas, and the festivals dependent upon it for their date, it cannot, I think, with absolute certainty be averred that the celebration occurs respectively upon the exact anniversary of the real occurrence ; but it is, perhaps, not inexpedient that there should be an instance in which the Church, in the exercise of her discretion, according to the freedom of the Gospel, should choose a day for the commemoration of an event, which, if commemorative observances be admitted at all, could hardly be dropped out of the catalogue. And we go back to the earliest times of the Church which afford any record respecting such usages —times long anterior to the days of declension and corruption—to find the first notices of the season of Christmas. *Keep,* then, my brethren, *your solemn feast;* keep it religiously before God, as men who rejoice in

His mercy to sinners through Christ, or you do not keep it at all. "I must by all means," says the Apostle Paul, with reference to a festival of the earlier and inferior dispensation, of which the observance then still remained—"I must by all means *keep this feast* which cometh, at Jerusalem." And with reference to the manifestations of our love and duty to Christ, he says, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us *keep the feast*"—words which are not to be taken as relating exclusively to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but which most certainly comprehend it in the objects to which they point. Christmas can never be said to be *kept* by non-communicants who are of age to communicate. Communicants may, of course, be prevented by particular circumstances from attending the holy table—it may so happen—but I speak of those who do not communicate at all. You then, my brethren, who are going to turn your backs upon the ordinance today, and do habitually turn your backs upon it, suffer us, not to invite your participation now—we desire to see no precipitate proceeding in such an act of Religion as this; but suffer us to charge it upon you that you rest not, that you must not feel yourselves safe, cannot have any title to be happy in your Religion, till you can "draw near with faith and take this holy sacrament to your comfort."

Finally, in conjunction with the charge to keep their solemn feasts, the prophet calls, we see, upon the people of Judah to "perform their vows." And are we not all under vows to God? Are we not all baptized as

Christians? O you, my youthful friends, who are very soon about to seal voluntarily, with your own lips, the vow of your baptism, and to seek the solemn benediction of your Church, in the name of her Lord—think, think of your early reception into the privileges of the covenant, your early dedication to your God and Saviour, your training now to be brought up to this point of confirmation—your engagements beyond in a holy and blessed service—your duty also in the very article just touched upon, to prepare yourselves for becoming communicants of the Church. And let us, my brethren, who are established as communicants, pray God that we may, each in his vocation, have grace to remember, and be helped and strengthened this day in remembering, our responsibility to "perform our vows," so that we may utter from the heart, and be kept from subsequently contradicting in our practice, the words of our Prayer-book which we are immediately about to put up: "And here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively (or living) sacrifice unto Thee, humbly beseeching Thee that all we who are partakers of this Holy Communion, may be fulfilled with Thy grace and heavenly benediction."

Which may God, of His infinite mercy, grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON VI.

THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS.*

Acts VIII. 8.

And there was great joy in that city.

Wherever the public celebration of glorious and important events is to be witnessed—wherever the demonstrations of general joy are to be made upon occasion of any success or achievement involving blessings to posterity—wherever any particular day is kept as the anniversary of a national deliverance, or is consecrated in popular observance to the memory of men who have greatly served their country,—a memory doubly endeared if they have suffered in that service,—there we usually discover the symptoms of a warm interest in the subject; we remark, everywhere, the contagious glow of exultation, the thrill of animated feeling. Every heart beats in unison with the sounds of triumph, every tongue is employed upon the gratifying theme: the whole mass of mind, if we may so express it, in the community is actuated by sentiments congenial and proper to the occasion: it is carried back into the midst of past transactions: their exciting details come up again, fresh and alive: they are entered into with enthusiasm, and dwelt upon with gratitude.

What, then, are the feelings with which we salute the

* Preached on Christmas-day, 1862.

festival of to-day? with which we commemorate the opening scene of a mighty and marvellous deliverance, spreading in its effects from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, which was planned and achieved by Almighty God Himself—the entrance upon the world of that dispensation of mystery, hid from ages and generations, which changed, with immeasurable blessing, the condition and prospects of the race? A change effected by no other means than the voluntary abasement, the voluntary sufferings and struggles, the voluntary submission to a frightful death, of One Who was in the beginning with God and was God, but gave Himself for us in love. In His love and in His pity, He redeemed us. Herein is love, not that we loved God—no! it was because we were sinners at enmity with a holy God, and by that enmity lost in ourselves, that He came in the flesh, to seek us and to save. Our estimate, then, of what we are engaged upon to-day —our sentiments, our emotions, are they commensurate with an occasion, do they adequately respond to a call, such as this?

It must, indeed, be owned that there are not many to whom Christmas and its associations are not, from one cause or other, welcome and agreeable. Some pardonable, if not amiable prejudice—some love for "the good old times," (better they were, in some points, than our own, though conspicuously inferior to them in others)—some attachment to customs and conventional demonstrations received from our forefathers and transplanted from a land far away, for which our human yearnings

remain,—these are feelings and habits of mind which, in many quarters, are seen to prevail in connexion with the observance. Or the season is found to commend itself by a certain expansion of heart which it is understood to engender—a kindly glow in the circle of kindred at the Christmas fireside, a cordial interchange of neighbourly and social good-will,—all of which, provided it be in subordination to the genuine Christian love of God and man, must be admitted to be in proper and perfect harmony with the observance, but which otherwise is rather poetry than Religion. Again, many persons are glad of some refreshing relaxation from the closeness of laborious employment; or find that a mere break, of a lively kind, in the routine of ordinary life,—a briskness of external impulse communicated to the spirits, comes acceptably in their way. Others are pleased with the presents of their friends; and others are fond of Christmas good cheer. Alas! there are some who go beyond this—for with shame and grief it must be confessed that such cases do exist—there are those who hail the holy festivals of the Church of Jesus Christ as if they were meant to minister occasion for actual intemperance and excess. *They* assuredly "come together" for their Christmas celebrations, "not for the better, but for the worse," and can only expect to draw down the heaviest wrath of God upon their heads. What? we must say to such a man, if any such should unhappily be found among us,—will you keep the day which is designed for the honour of God in Christ, as if you were keeping the orgies of the heathen Bacchus? A person

who drinketh himself drunk because it is Christmas-time, might as well think of honouring the day by acts of adultery or theft.

But let us indulge the hope on behalf of all, if possible, who are here present in this house of God, that they not only entertain the disposition to honour the festival, but wish to honour it in a right manner; and never let us admit any inference to the prejudice of the festival itself, which is drawn from any occasional instances of its abuse. The very observance of the Lord's own day might be assailed upon precisely the same grounds. And in matters which do not claim to rest upon the unchangeable appointment or precedent of Scripture, we ought not hastily to depart from the immemorial usage of the Christian Church, nor lightly to regard the prescribed order of ecclesiastical authority exercised, in our reformed Communion, according to that discretion which God has given to the different portions of the Church Catholic. Men should not only be careful, when they cut away the diseased branches, to avoid wounding the stem itself, which has often been rashly done, but they should spare also those engrafted shoots which, though not essential to its life and preservation, yet add to the beauty and fruitfulness of the plant.

Let, then—in the review of all which we have just been saying—let, then, the season be honoured, and, I will add, let all its customary distinctions be cherished and retained and passed on, as I think we should wish them to be, to those who are to follow us. If we make

the aisles and arches of our temple resound with the heavenly music of Handel, specially practised for the occasion; if we garnish our pillars with evergreens; if we spread a table for some two or three hundred of our school-children in the parish—let us not be met, in any quarter, in the spirit of the question, "Why was this waste of the ointment made?" Why are time and money, which might be better spent, spent in this way? The hosannas rung out in praise of Christ have been coupled, before now, with a display of branches, He Himself accepting and approving the tribute (as He did also that of the costly ointment poured upon His head); and the common, customary festivities of marriage have been sanctioned by His presence, and promoted by His miraculous exercise of power.

All this, then, being conceded, and conceded freely, let us take care, at the same time, that we do really, seriously, devoutly keep in view the ultimate object of these several observances. When we are told, in the words of our text, that "there was great joy in that city" (the city of Samaria), we find that it was a joy felt among the people, because they had been reached by the tidings of salvation—had recognised, under the ministry of Philip, the power of the Gospel of grace, and had closed with the overtures of mercy. And if, in *this* city, my brethren, there are, at the present moment, manifestations of great joy, it ought to be a joy partaking of the same character, and founded upon our home-felt acceptance of the same evangelical truths. It ought to be a joy breathing the full senti-

ment of a well-known prophetic passage, as applied by the Apostle Paul—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" How welcome the approach of the Messenger, watched for, as it were, from afar, upon every commanding eminence, by men longing and looking out for their deliverance! Herald after herald is here pictured to us as age follows upon age, still echoing to an expectant world the message of the angel—"Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy."

Consider the circumstances of that original announcement.

To shepherds abiding in the field and keeping watch over their flocks by night; to men of humble condition and simple capacity, leading an obscure, unvarying life, and undergoing, at the moment, the customary hardships of their condition; to men who had little concern with any high transactions of the world—who had slight reason to look for any tidings of moment, and could have but slender hope or ambition of bettering their situation by any changes here—to *these* the message came; to these the envoy of the Lord God Omnipotent addressed himself: "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of *great joy,* which shall be to all people: for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Unto us also this message is delivered; unto us this peace is published; unto us a Child is born; unto

us a Son is given. Unto all who will embrace them, in every condition of life, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, are tendered the unspeakable mercies of the Most High. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." That is the open, unreserved, unrestricted invitation which proceeds from God. We have all a common interest in these tidings of gladness to the world; we have all a common property in the benefits of this salvation. O may we never turn them, by our neglect and perverseness, to the savour of death! And O may we be aided, through the grace of our God, in averting such a danger, by the manner in which we now proceed to weigh the purport of this celestial intelligence, and to examine the grounds of joy which it envelops.

If, indeed, as is pointed out by the admirable old divine, Dr. Barrow (from whom I am taking here and there some other hints also), we would enumerate all the subjects for thanksgiving which spring from this one, we must comprehend in our view the whole scheme of the Gospel—we must include the whole succession of graces and blessings which flow from the death, the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His effusion of the Spirit from on high. For the work of our redemption, undertaken long before, was, in a manner, achieved when our Saviour became incarnate. The movement of that wonderful process began. Nor was there, in all the history of His life and death, with all their circumstantial and consequent wonders, a single incident more

fitted to make the stone "cry out of the wall and the beam out of the timber" to answer it, if men should hold their peace, than His original submission to infirm mortality. The need, indeed, on the part of man was great. Here was a moral and responsible agent, wonderfully gifted, but fallen under the power and curse of sin, conscience-stricken and self-condemned, yet without remedy and without hope, having death, judgment, and eternity to face: but who would have looked for such a provision of eternal wisdom to meet this mysterious case of exigency,—nothing less being done than that He who had glory with His Father before the world was should come down and make Himself man —should enter this world a weak, wailing, helpless infant—should draw our first natural nourishment from the breast of a human mother—should be carried in her arms and laid to rest in a stable, because there was no other room for the Son of God:—what marvel which followed, in the whole execution of the objects for which He came into the world, could surpass such a marvel as this? Well might the Apostle say that, "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness," where he proceeds to make it the first point in his enumeration of particulars, that "God was manifest in the flesh."

Upon this fact, then—the fact of the Incarnation—let us now fix our regards. Look at it—but you are at once carried back to things of the ages preceding, and things which took place before the foundation of the world. It was planned from eternity that the seed of

the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Look at the continuous stream of the Divine purposes, and trace it to its fountain in that promise. Look at the train laid from the beginning for a glorious future. Look at the long preparation of centuries; the early and reiterated prophecies; the symbolical signs and wonders of old; the marked typical occurrences; the emblematical institutions and significant ceremonies of the former covenant; the severance from the rest of the nations of a peculiar people, from whom was to spring Messiah the Prince; the providential direction of events below, all things converging to this one grand issue which concerned the world at large. We see the tide of ages rolling on, and the promise emerging more and more, till, in the fulness of God's appointed time, the blessed reality was developed and disclosed. Nations and empires and languages had risen and passed away; sages and conquerors and names of renown had dazzled for their day and slept the sleep of death; the children of a long, long line of many generations had been gathered to their fathers before that Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings, under Whose radiance it is our portion to pass our day upon the earth. But now has the Gospel preached to Adam been made good, and the seed of the woman has sprung up in the sight of the world: Now has the mystical Isaac, the miraculous son of promise, appeared: Now has the grant to Abraham taken effect, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed: Now has that Shiloh come of Whom Jacob foretold that to Him

should the gathering of the people be: Now is that Mosaic assurance more than verified—"A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me" (as the founder of a new covenant), "Him shall ye hear:" Now is that Star come out of Jacob, of which the vision in distance averted the curse of Balaam from the people among whom it was destined to arise: Now is that Divine oath discharged to David —"Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne:" Now are the illustrious predictions of Isaiah exactly fulfilled, such as, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse;" "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son;" "There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:"* Now has that Righteous Branch sprouted forth which is promised by Jeremy and Zechariah: Now the One Shepherd, of Ezekiel; the Son of Man, of Daniel; the Ruler of Israel, Whose goings forth have been of old, of Micah; the Desire of all nations, of Haggai; the Messenger of the Covenant and Sun of Righteousness, of Malachi, the last of the prophets, have all, in very reality, appeared. Now is that kingdom indefeasibly established which the great series of patriarchs and prophets, of kings and of wise men and righteous men, saw afar off and rejoiced in the prospect, and which is ordained in the counsels of God to be "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations."

Before this period, the world was made up of two very unequal portions, divided by a strong wall of

* Isaiah lix. 20, as quoted in Romans xi. 26.

partition from each other. The people of God, whose advantage was "much every way," and who enjoyed many and signal privileges, if only they had known how to profit by them, were yet under the yoke of a mere preparatory dispensation, and the ordinances prescribed to them were but the shadowy prefiguration of better things to come in substance. Of the remaining part of the world, the condition was deplorable indeed. Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, they were without God in the world; the children of wrath and disobedience; possessed with base and degrading conceptions of Deity; sunk in monstrous and most filthy idolatries; serving the spirits of darkness who blinded their minds; dead in trespasses and sins.

Such was the sad but real condition of the Gentile world; such is the condition now of prodigious portions of the globe; such were our own remote forefathers; and such, by fatal consequence, we should have been ourselves. But Christ came in the flesh. The barriers of separation were broken down: Jew and Gentile who would believe were brought into one spiritual fraternity of love, and became the candidates for a common inheritance of glory. This Gospel of the kingdom, although still in commixture and conflict with the kingdom of darkness (for the tares and the wheat must grow together till the harvest), is gaining, according to God's appointed times and by the steps which He regulates, its destined ascendancy in the world, subduing, in its progress, the hearts of men, softening their

manners, enlightening their understandings, and purifying their lives. The grain of mustard-seed has long ago become a great tree; the little leaven has operated upon an extensive mass; the religion of Christ, from small and despised beginnings, has worked its way through the lapse of ages and the multiplied revolutions of the world. And it will work its way. Neither the varied series of events, the changing policy of nations, nor the perpetually opposing struggle of a depraved nature; neither persecution from without, nor long and deep corruption within; neither the coldness and inconsistency of its professed followers, nor the high-sounding appeal of infidel pride; neither the laxity and worldliness of its legitimate guardians, nor the vain jangling of lawless innovators and enthusiasts; neither the disguised sneers of a smooth and skilful sophistry, nor the miserable distractions of heresy and schism, nor the mortifying exposure at different times of wild and wide-spread delusion among believers;—neither these nor any other obstructions, all hitherto ineffectual or ultimately proving subservient to the cause which they had seemed to threaten, shall ever be able to crush the work of God, or forbid its travelling on to its appointed mark. For "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The earth shall yet "be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "The multitude of the isles may be glad thereof, and all the ends of the world shall see the salvation of our God." The voice shall penetrate to the darkest corners of the habitable globe—"Arise,

shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!"

And now, if we descend, in leaving our subject, from all this magnificent and far-spread contemplation, and look into ourselves—scrutinise our own hearts, how do we feel as parts of this whole—as the creatures of the hand of God, who are personally and individually concerned in these themes of grandeur and manifestations of grace—who are personally and individually among the subjects of all this amazing intervention from the realms above? Are we adequately impressed by this thought?—practically and habitually under the influence of this conviction?—alive, awake to all the responsibility which it implies?—prepared to appropriate the blessings, the consolations, the hopes of glory, with which it is associated? We look for the kingdom of God abroad and in the future; we pray every day that it may come; we forget, too many of us, the warning words of the Redeemer—"Behold, the kingdom of God is WITHIN YOU."

SERMON VII.

CHRIST COMING TO HIS OWN.

St. John I. 10—13.

He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The first statement contained in this remarkable passage presents a fact upon which our minds do not, perhaps, sufficiently dwell, and the magnitude of which we do not, any of us, sufficiently appreciate; the simple fact, in itself, that "He was in the world." Let us rest a little upon the contemplation of it; let us familiarize ourselves with this great fact and bring it home to our minds. *Who* was in the world?—not merely by His invisible presence,—not by the ubiquity of His spiritual essence,—not by His pervading providence and rule, but made flesh and dwelling among us,—one of ourselves,—in corporeal and substantial reality, born, growing up, living, treading the earth as a man among men; was *He* thus in the world Who was in the beginning, or from all eternity, with God and was God? He by Whom all things were made, and without Whom was not anything

made that was made? It must have been a portentous need on our part which brought Him down, and a mighty and marvellous purpose which He came to effect in our behalf; it was such a need and such a purpose as are described in the words, "I looked, and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore Mine own arm brought salvation unto Me, and My righteousness, it sustained Me."

Christ, the original creating Word, was in the world. We "believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." But we also, in the same symbol of our faith, predicate of the "one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God," that by Him "all things were made." And this is the very statement of Scripture in our text, and in other places which speak the same language. The work of creation is primarily ascribed to the Father, in the distribution, if we may use the term, of the parts sustained by the Godhead, with reference to this visible frame of the universe and its inhabitants. But the mysterious plurality of persons in that Godhead of the One true God, is intimated in the very account of the creation itself; and in the words, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness," a plurality of persons is represented to us as actually engaged in that work. And this was perceived by the Jews and taught by their writers, of course without the benefit of that full development of the doctrine of the Trinity which appears in the New Testament. The Son, as St. Paul

expresses it in one of those passages which plainly clothe the Lord Jesus Christ with the attributes of Divinity, is One by Whom, in mysterious co-operation, the Father made the worlds: and the Spirit, in His genial influence—in more than one sense the author and giver of life—brooded over the unformed mass and infused into it a vivifying energy.

These are subjects too deep for man to fathom; such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for us, we cannot attain unto it. God has graciously made known as much as we are now fitted to understand, as much as we want for our guidance and comfort; if we would rudely and rashly break in upon the bounds which He has set around the place of His glory, we gain no satisfaction, and only pay the penalty of our profaneness.

Christ, then, by Whom the world was made, was in the world. And He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." But the world, the beings, taken in the mass, who were the subjects of this amazing intervention, knew Him not. And now that He has been, long ago, in the world, and has accomplished the objects for which He came into it, and has left behind Him the eternal testimonies of His visit to the children of men, and by His Spirit, by His word, by His sacraments, by the standing and perpetual ministrations of His Church, is among them—alive and breathing still, alive in an unseen but efficacious presence, and breathing the breath of an immortal power—how does the world now know or regard Him? The world—speaking of that portion

of it which is called Christendom—has adopted the profession of the Christian faith. But how far does this world, this nominally Christian world, really recognise the claims of Christ the Saviour? honestly and practically respond to His own charge, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me"? experimentally and in earnest accept the principle which He establishes and own its sovereign sway, "This is life eternal, to KNOW Thee, the only God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent"? What are the prevailing influences, what are the reigning sentiments, what are the conventional maxims, what are the common practices, what are the familiar lives and habits to be witnessed among those—take them collectively—who profess and call themselves Christians? Are they such as carry the holy stamp of the Gospel? Are they such as mark out this company of people to the eye, as disciples of the lowly Lamb of God? Let the world, this Christian world, answer for itself; let it testify whether its pretensions to the name of Christian are genuine—whether it is, in fact, identified with the cause in which, by the assumption of that name, it avows itself enlisted? A worldly man, or a worldly-minded person, does that convey, in the language of the Christian world, the idea of a person devoted to Christ? So it ought plainly to do, if the Christian world were Christian indeed—if there were not an opposition between this Christian world and Christ.

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." There is a distinction of gender in the original, which cannot be preserved in English, unless we render

the words in some such way as this,—He came to that which belonged to Him, to His own proper possessions, or His own territories, and His own people received Him not. He came to *His own*,—His own, *here*, refers to *things: His own* received Him not—it *here* refers to *persons*. That the Jewish Church and State, in their entire system and constitution, and by the very principle of their existence, belonged immediately to God, and constituted the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, is what it is needless to indicate; and that Christ the Word, before His incarnation, maintained a special connexion with the affairs of Israel of old, and presided in a peculiar manner over the destinies of the people, appears from different passages of Scripture. And all which was done for them, and all which was prescribed to them, and all which was made the subject of their national expectation and hope,—all, all centred in the Messiah. He came, therefore, to His own property. And His own people, whom He found there, received Him not. The chosen, the peculiar people whom the Lord their God, by a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm, and by great signs and wonders, had separated and set apart for His own, they would not receive His Son. They had maltreated His servants, they had murdered His messengers; but a hope yet remained, there was a last great resource which might be tried. "It may be they will reverence" My Son. But no; the Son is sent, and the husbandmen said, "This is the heir: come, let us kill him."

"If we had been in the days of our fathers," said the

Jews, before this catastrophe, "we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." If we had been in the days of the Jews, we, in like manner, shall be at once prompted to say, we would not have been partakers in the blood of Christ. Yet, awful as is the supposition, my brethren, that any of us would then have repudiated the Redeemer and lent ourselves, in the natural sequence of things, to His condemnation, we must not be too sure of ourselves in this point. Let us spare a moment to consider and examine this matter, before we pronounce too boldly in our own favour.

We have succeeded, by external privilege and profession, to the place of the people of God. Our privileges and our proper characteristics were foreshadowed in those of the ancient Israel; and we are, therefore, as Christians, declared by the Apostle St. Peter, in terms drawn from the language of the earlier covenant, to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." A people, he adds, whose vocation it is to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called" them "out of darkness into His marvellous light." Christ, therefore, proposed to *us*, is proposed to *His own*—His own Church, His own professed people—His own by deeper obligations, by more constraining ties, by more endearing claims, than those which established His property in the Israel of old. We are not our own, but "bought with a price." And if we try ourselves honestly by this test—the test of the recognition, in our hearts and lives, of the right which Christ has acquired over us, in virtue of

that price paid for the ransom of our souls,—too many, too many of us, it is to be feared, must be brought to the sad and shameful confession, that Christ has, indeed, been presented to us, and we are numbered among those who are properly His own; but His own, and we among them, have not received Him. It will not do to say, as if repelling, perhaps indignantly, an offensive imputation, We have never rejected Christ: we believe in the Bible: we claim the benefit of our baptism: we belong to the Church. O my brethren, have we received, have we owned Him in our hearts, such as He is in Himself, such as He is portrayed in the Bible, such as He is mystically exhibited in baptism, such as He is proclaimed, if she understand her message, by the Church,—intimately and in the very marrow of our souls, acknowledging the principle laid down by the Apostle, that "the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all"—one sinless spotless victim for all this vast family of sinners—"then were all dead"—all lay under condemnation, and without hope of life eternal—and "that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Which died for them and rose again?"

If we repudiate these appeals of our Religion, in their homefelt power—if we do not desire to entertain them—if our minds are averse from them—if they are strange, foreign, distasteful to our feelings,—then, in effect, my brethren, we are refusing Him that speaketh,—we are counting the blood of the covenant an unholy or worthless thing; and, in the figure of speech used by the

Apostle, crucifying the Lord afresh and putting Him to an open shame. And if such be, in any instance, our state of mind, the verdict must be rendered upon us, that (supposing our continuance in that state), we should, without any figure of speech, have been led to concur in the crucifixion, had it been our lot to live in the days of the Jews.

If, on the other hand, we do so receive Christ, as His own ought to receive him,—if we have so learned Christ, have been so schooled in our spirits, as cordially and thankfully to admit His claims upon us, as stated by the Apostle in the passage which has been here cited,—if, with all our manifold and still recurring deficiencies of love and duty, we can, nevertheless, say that the life which we live in the flesh, we "live by the faith of the Son of God"—then mark what are our privileges and our blessings, preserved to us undamaged from our original sealing in the covenant, and how infinitely they surpass all else which is within the reach of man. We are owned, though, of course, in a different sense, as the sons of God, ourselves. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." And the process is described by which this new sonship is effected. They receive it, not by natural birth,—not by having the blood of any eminent forefathers running in their veins—not as the result of any particular intermarriage—not by means of any edict or conveyance of privilege personally, by human authority: they "are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

They are adopted into His family, and receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, signifying Father. They are made sensible of being established in such happy relations with God, that they can invoke Him, through Christ, with the affectionate reverence of children loving Him and loved by Him with an everlasting love. They know that, though all claims of earthly kindred should fail, or all natural human affection should become extinct—though Abraham should be ignorant of them and Israel should not acknowledge them —though a woman should be found to forget her sucking-child, and cease to have compassion on the fruit of her womb, yet God is their Father by an unchangeable covenant, and they as His children will never be forgotten in His sight. He will give them "a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters," even "an everlasting name which shall not be cut off." And the literal child, trained to know his God and Saviour, and lifting his little hands to heaven and calling upon God as his Father (to do that is the very first thing which we learn in our Religion), the literal child, calling upon God as his Father in the prayer bequeathed to us by Christ Himself, has his share in the blessings and acts of grace described in our text. If he can rightly call God his Father, it is plain that he has received power to become the son of God. Nor is their share denied to others who, whatever be the development of their physical stature, are yet but babes in Christ. In fact, the first act of this affiliation, introductory to all which follows, is, beyond all question, in our baptism: for we must use means—we must use the

means of God's appointment, and devoutly believe in their efficacy. That is the part of humility and the part of faith; that is, in reality, the spiritual view of the subject. Without the use of the means, we should have no title, no ground whatever, to look for the ulterior benefits comprehended in the description of those to whom Christ gives the power to become the sons of God, and who are said to be born of God; for except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The administration of the water of baptism is, in the ordinary and established course of things, the first step. He cannot be said to receive Christ, who has not received and will not receive Christ's ordinance. But if we have no warrant, except under extraordinary circumstances, to look for the ulterior work of the grace of God without the use of baptism, how many baptized Christians, on the other hand, fall away from all their baptismal engagements, and forfeit, like Esau, their birthright of blessing! O that we could, if it were possible, win them, one and all, back to their Father, and persuade them to receive their Redeemer, that they may be owned as the sons of God, and be made, in a fresh sense, and by a new exertion of His quickening power, new creatures in Christ Jesus! Vain, thoughtless, vicious, worldly-minded, sceptical, hard-hearted, stupid, and unconcerned about their eternal welfare, whatever be the nature, or whatever the degree of their alienation from God, they are not beyond the reach of His renovating grace. "For this My son was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found." It is necessary

that this grace should act upon us all; that we should be "transformed in the renewing of our minds:" that we should be different beings from what nature or the world would have made us, or could make us. A crisis full of marked incident—a sudden excitement at one particular instant of our lives—a vehement struggle, partaking of the character of animal sensation, which comes and goes off like a fit—an electrical effect and a sort of dramatic exhibition of transported feeling, produced by the unsparing application of certain stimulants in religious pharmacy—these, or anything resembling or approaching to these, although favoured sometimes and promoted by good men, are not the safest phenomena of the process, nor such as seem best to correspond with the description of Christ, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But means having been used, privileges conveyed and sealed—all conspiring agencies being at work (the word of truth, among others, by which we are expressly said to be begotten again),—the energy of the Spirit gives effect to every instrument employed, and works upon the man, whether for the daily renewal of the subject and his gradual advancement in holiness, or his recovery to God from a wicked and worldly state. It is the Spirit Who moves him to repentance, prompts him to flee from the wrath to come, and to clasp to his heart the gracious offers of mercy; enlightens his mind in heavenly truth, brings forth in him the fruits of righteousness, enables him to

go on his way rejoicing, and patiently to persevere in good works, abounding therein more and more to the end.

My brethren, let us look into ourselves, and find out what part or lot we have in this matter. It is worth while, if we believe that we have souls, to enquire whether they are in the way to be saved or to be lost. Here, then, are two pictures: they are drawn by the hand of Christ—which of them will suit us? which will exhibit our resemblance? Christ comes to the world, and to those who are nominally His own: they do not know Him; they do not receive Him. He comes to another class of human beings—(let us dare to hope that those who, here, this day, are about to partake in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, belong to this class), they know Him—they receive Him—they believe on His name. They discern in Him, and in Him alone, their salvation: they accept and embrace it: they believe with the heart unto righteousness. To them, in the most complete and ample sense, He gives power to become the sons of God. Their heart has been reached; it has found what it wanted, and cannot be mistaken: it passes its testimony to the understanding; and making always due allowance for strong faith in some cases and weaker faith in others, as well as for many humbling mementos of infirmity in all, the declaration is made good, without presumption, without fanatical extravagance, that the Spirit Itself beareth witness with their spirit, that they "are the children of God. And if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ."

They are, in the only happy view of the case, His own: He knows them and is known of them: He speaks to them in reassuring language, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee: I have called thee by thy name: thou art Mine." And to them, in the consummation of all things, belong the glorious words, "They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels."

SERMON VIII.

THE PUNISHMENT OF SODOM.

St. Luke XVII. 32, 33.

Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

A good deal of difficulty has been felt respecting certain passages in the Evangelists, where the Coming of the Son of Man is described in some detail by Christ Himself; and a variety of explanations have been offered with the view of conciliating the seeming repugnance of some portions of these passages to other portions of the same. The words appear at one time to point to things then close at hand, and at another to refer to the final judgment of the world. And hence it has been the opinion of some persons, that both events are presented to us throughout, under one description, and they have laboured to explain particular expressions in a manner to make them applicable to either case; while others, confining the whole description to one period, have, in a similar manner, adapted their explanations to this supposition. As, for example, when the Lord declares that "this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled," the words, "this generation" have been conceived to indicate, not, in the usual sense, simply the

generation then living, but "this race of the Jews," which should continue, through successive ages, till the predicted consummation of all things below. It can hardly fail to appear, however, to every reader carefully and without prepossession studying these passages, that they do contain some expressions which can only apply to the doom then impending over rebel Jerusalem, and others which can only apply to the general judgment of mankind at the last day. Of the former class are those intimations respecting flight and escape from the scene, which cannot be appropriate in describing the end of the world, as well as the declaration which closes the chapter where our text is found, that wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together; the eagle of the Roman standard suggesting a ready and apt illustration of that devouring fierceness of the Roman arms, of which the Jews, wherever found, were, in the times of trouble which were fast coming on, ordained to be specially a prey.

The prophetic discourse of Christ, therefore, in these passages, is of a mixed character; yet not so mixed but that it is left practicable to separate the parts which belong to nearer events, and those which relate to one more remote, while other parts apply to both alike. His coming to judgment upon Jerusalem, the victorious establishment of His kingdom upon earth, and the judgment of the great day, are all in His contemplation, and His notice of all is naturally prompted by such questions as were addressed to Him upon the occasion recorded in the 24th chapter of

St. Matthew. These questions, with whatever degrees of distinctness or indistinctness as to their several objects, in the minds of those who propounded them, will be seen to embrace in their proper import, a very extended range of enquiry. Adverting to the utter destruction of the temple which their Master had foretold, the disciples there ask Him, "When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

Without professing to have disposed, in these slight observations, of all the difficulties which may attach to the passages in question, in one of which our present text occurs, we may pass on to remark, that the whole of the description which they contain is so far to be regarded as one, as is implied in the fact that the awful downfall of Jerusalem, with its attendant horrors, emblematically represented the final judgment of the wicked. In this point of view, indeed, the destruction of Jerusalem is identified with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and with other signal visitations, in which the energy of the wrath of God has been put forth; and we find that the "day of the Lord" is a term made applicable in Scripture to all such visitations. And all these warnings, whether relating to things now past, or to things future, or to both together,—all these warnings, my brethren, "are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come," whose lot is cast under the final dispensation of the Gospel. The cities just mentioned are, we are told, "set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." They

are so set forth in the Word of God; and they are so set forth in the face of nature, whose aspect, upon the spot, carries the traces and constitutes of itself the record of their memorable desolation. Their history, indeed, affords a lively picture of the last outpouring of Divine judgment upon the wicked. When we read that "the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven," and that "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace," we can hardly fail to be reminded of the visions of the other world vouchsafed to St. John, in which the portion of the condemned is described by saying that they "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone," and that "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

My brethren, we cannot appreciate the mercies of God in Christ unless we estimate rightly the hateful nature of sin in His holy eyes, and the necessity which exists, in the preservation of His perfect attributes, that justice should be executed upon transgression. Too little are these awful truths regarded; too readily are they, if regarded at all, glossed over, and accommodated, and explained away by a careless, undutiful, ungrateful, and infatuated world. The Lord Himself has pointedly directed our attention, in the context of the words which form the basis of our present reflections, to the example of these devoted cities of old, and He has warned us of the more unsuspected among our own dangers, by specifying such evidences of want of preparation on the part of the inhabitants, as consisted, not in any of the flagrant impurities and filthy abominations to which they were

notoriously addicted, but in their reckless abandonment to the business and pleasures of the world, without thought of their responsibility to God; their oblivious immersion in those cares and pursuits and occupations of human life which in themselves are necessary or lawful, but which become pernicious, and assume the character of sin, when we make them the object of our existence; when we live for them, forgetting our higher destiny and the higher demands upon us which are presented in our connexion with the world above; when, in short, we serve these earthly objects instead of serving God. "As it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all." Eating and drinking are absolutely necessary to the very preservation of our own being: marrying wives and being given in marriage, mentioned just before in the similar enumeration which refers to the days of Noah, are necessary for continuing the species, in the persons of those who are to succeed us: buying, selling, planting, and building are requisite proceedings or operations for carrying on the useful purposes of life:—all these things, therefore, are only censurable in their abuse, and the simple fact of our being engaged in any one of them at the moment of the coming of the Son of Man would not prove us unprepared. But they are abused and become the ministers of sin to the soul, when they absorb the faculties or the attachments of man, and deaden within him the remem-

brance of eternity and the principle of spiritual life. Engrossed by the cares and the riches and the pleasures of this present life—making "provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof," "serving divers lusts and pleasures," cumbered, perchance, about much serving in domestic details—going "their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandize," and praying to be excused from attending to the calls of God,—the professed followers of Christ may still have a name to live, but they are dead; they may pass in the world as creditable Christians enough, but they are not recognised in that character by the Lord Who "knoweth them that are His," by the great Shepherd, Who knows and is known of His sheep—they have no part in the blessed promise, "they shall be *Mine*, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." They answer the roll-call of the Church upon the stated returns of her service, and stand to their arms in the formal discharge of duty upon parade; but put them to the proof as soldiers of Christ in the actual conflict with the world and the flesh and the devil, and they have no heart to fight, no disposition but to surrender themselves to the foe, upon terms which, falsely indeed, but plausibly promise them ease. What do they know about "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge?" What do they care about comprehending with all saints —*i. e.* with all true believers—"what is the breadth and length, and depth and height" of that love? What do they feel about the faith in His salvation, which they should carry about as the animating principle of their lives? What do they understand, or how do they con-

cern themselves about grieving the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they "are sealed unto the day of redemption"? And yet, if you can get them, in your solicitude for their safety, to stop for one moment in the hurry of their worldly career, and honestly to face the enquiry, can they deny that these are points of the Christian Religion with which, if they would be Christians indeed, and would share in the hopes of Christians, it is necessary for them to have a practical and home-felt acquaintance?

Our Saviour Christ has come still closer to the point in adverting to the history of Sodom and Gomorrah, by referring to the individual example of one who was rescued in the first instance from the perdition in which her fellow-citizens were involved, but who became afterwards a signal monument of the Divine vengeance. "Remember Lot's wife." We know the particulars of the narrative. Lot himself lingers: the angels hasten him; they take him and his family by the hand; they bring them forth, the Lord being merciful to him, and they charge him—"Escape for thy life: look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." This charge was not observed by his wife. "His wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." She indulged in some regrets, we may presume, for the things which she had left behind her, and the home which she had possessed in the guilty city—perhaps for some of its guilty company, with whom she had been wont to beguile the time. The greatness of her deliverance, the horrors from which she was snatched, the awful manifestation of the curse of God upon the place, the

contrast of the mercy extended to herself and those belonging to her,—all these considerations did not avail to overpower her criminal predilection for what she had lost. And while she yielded to the perilous attraction, and drew back from those who were urging her in the path of safety, she was overtaken by the descending flood, and at once becoming encased and encrusted by the nitro-sulphureous matter, which was poured down from heaven, she stood fast and immovable—the human creature was a pillar of salt. And it is said to have stood for some subsequent ages.

Alas! this looking back, what mischief does it not work for us—what dangers does it not bring upon our foolish heads! Men who have been ensnared in seductive habits of intemperance or dissolute pleasure—in the unhallowed excitement of debauched and profane company—in the destructive fascinations of the gaming-table, or the multiplied temptations of a course of extravagant vanity and profuse ostentation, receive some providential check; their ruin is impending, they become alarmed, they are touched with remorse, they listen to advice, they see the necessity of repentance and reform, they abjure their past practices, they resolve to heed the warning voice of their Bibles and to follow their heavenly guide. They seem to be new men; and the language of charitable hope pronounces them new creatures in Christ Jesus. But the moral disease is not eradicated from the system, and is ready, under the action of some accidental provocative, to break out afresh. The seed has fallen upon stony ground: it has sprung up with a promising

appearance, but it has no sufficient or stable root, and it withers under temptation. Some old companion, exercising an influence for ill, and using the persuasions of worldly good-fellowship; some particular opportunity of indulgence difficult to be resisted; some circumstances reviving the force of insidious habit, suggest the belief that a slight surrender may be ventured upon, and, in an evil hour, they master the imperfect penitent: he treats the instance as a trifle, and thinks that he may ask, like Lot himself, in his plea to escape to Zoar, "Is it not a little one?" and he soon and sadly verifies the scriptural adage, that "The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

But we have seen already that it is not only against these grosser transgressions that the Lord Jesus would have us stand upon the guard; nor is it only in such cases that we are liable to the danger of drawing back unto perdition. My brethren, where our treasure is, there are our hearts; and if our hearts and our treasure are in the world, in its drudging business, in its money-making speculations, in its political agitations, in its ambitious schemes, in its gaudy vanities, in its glittering pleasures,—then it is very plain that our heart is not given to the gracious Lord Who demands it, and that our treasure is not the "one pearl of great price." But if, by the goodness of God, our eyes have been opened to discern the things which belong to our peace—if we do feel that, our lot having been cast in a sinful world, the Lord has done wonderful things for our rescue, and that we are as brands plucked out of the burning, then

let us continually watch and continually pray for the succours of His grace, that we may not, because we may be called perhaps to some distasteful sacrifice or exertion, or because we may encounter disappointment in the efforts of our zeal, be found to fall from our steadfastness; and that we may never be ensnared to yield again by little and little to the demands of a corrupt nature and a corrupt world to slacken in our devotion, to become weary in well-doing, and to fall off in any point of holy practice or religious observance, private or public. "Remember Lot's wife." Remember that "no man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." "If any man draw back, saith the Lord, My soul hath no pleasure in him." Alas! how little do men in general regard the weight of a sentence like this!—"My soul hath no pleasure in him." A being with eternity before him, disowned and repudiated by God!

There is great danger that in an easy and respectable situation, where all the decencies of life must be preserved, and a large measure of comforts and indulgences may be freely enjoyed, without conspicuously or consciously treading on forbidden ground—there is great danger in such a situation, that men may mistake the mere smooth and regular tenor of their lives for a condition of spiritual safety and acceptance before God. It is well for us to consider, in such a case, that there are, in human life, although they may not appear to threaten or come near us, severe and searching tests of faith and duty,—and to probe ourselves honestly by the supposition of our being thrust into such trials. How should we acquit ourselves? how do we stand

prepared in heart? Suppose that our lives were put in jeopardy in the cause of Christ, should we rely upon His promise and refuse to draw back from His directions? "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." These words of Christ appear primarily to relate to the protection which would be over the heads of those whom He reserved for His own work upon earth, and to the preservation of their lives, upon their abiding, through the power of faith, by His instructions, in the fearful scenes which were approaching; while others, distrusting His promise and seeking safety by means of their own devising, would fall the victims of their unbelief. But the words may very plainly be adapted to the case of those who are actual martyrs in His cause; and who, being able to say with the holy Apostle, "Yea, and though I be offered upon the service and sacrifice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all," do, by a happy paradox, preserve their lives in losing them. They lose, what they must in any case soon part with, this perishable and troubled life below, and they preserve to themselves the life which "is hid with Christ in God." And such were they,—let me pay them, upon this first opportunity afforded me, some little passing tribute,—such were they* among my own brethren of the clergy who, after voluntarily out-staying their appointed time at the Quarantine Station, have (in addition to previous

* Reference is made to the deaths, by ship fever, in 1847, of the Revs. R. Anderson and C. J. Morris, Missionaries of the S.P.G.

victims of the same stamp, in other places) been taken from us since I left you for a remote part of the Diocese. Honoured be their names among men, and dear be their memories,—although it was not to this reward that they looked, and they have found a better, through Him Whose unprofitable servants they owned themselves, but Whom they served in all humble faith and love,—honoured be their names, dear be their memories, and precious and profitable be their example to us all! Mournful, indeed, have been the gaps in the ranks of our clergy, and severe has been our loss of faithful and exemplary men, who rightly counted not their lives dear unto them in meeting a loud and urgent call to minister among the crowds of sick and dying strangers, and to speak words of comfort and extend deeds of mercy to the hundreds of bereaved and desolate survivors. They would not, as some would have urged them to do, leave their poor fellow-Christians to die like dogs; nor the widow and the fatherless to sit and weep without a pastor to soothe and instruct them. We can hardly be warranted to say yet that "one woe is past"; but if it be passing, our own experience may surely suffice to teach us that another woe may come quickly: let us always stand prepared, and if we have been at all beneficially schooled by the melancholy lessons which have been before our eyes, let us not impatiently escape back to the lightness and frivolity and worldliness of heart which possibly attached to too many of us before. "Remember Lot's wife."

SERMON IX.

THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH.

GEN. XXXIX. 1.

And Joseph was brought down to Egypt.

THE history of Joseph is, in so many points of view, pregnant with interest and instruction, that, although the reflections which it suggests and the practical lessons which it conveys require, for the most part, no laboured elucidation in order to their being properly understood and applied, it can never be a dry nor an unprofitable task to follow them out. And this narrative of patriarchal times being brought before us in successive portions by the Church in her course of Sunday services, during the present season of the year, it will not be inappropriate to range through its whole extent, in order to select, here and there, some prominent points which may offer themselves to our regard.

The first feature of the story which it occurs to notice —presuming the story itself, in every part, to be familiar in the recollection of us all—is the unequalled power of that touching and tender simplicity with which it exhibits all the vivid realities of domestic feeling and affection, breaking out in the genuineness of nature, the same 3500 years ago that she is now. A few short strokes, entirely unstudied and unambitious of effect—

or rather, in the dignity of Divine inspiration, produced in disdain of all attempt at effect—come home to our human bosoms in a way to which no high-wrought tale of imaginative pathos, no elaborate result of artificial description, could possibly pretend. We can hardly, in our modern modes of expression, even point out these excellences without damaging that native delicacy of truth in the picture, which will not bear the touch of any other than the original hand. But we would indicate, as examples,—referring your memories, my brethren, to the words of the Bible itself,—the force which Joseph is described as having put upon his own feelings, in probing those of his brethren to the quick, in order to work in them, by a seeming severity and harshness, the humbling effect which was necessary for their good; the effort with which he enquires, with the air of a stranger, while they are bowing themselves before him to the earth, after their welfare, and asks whether their father is well, the old man of whom they spake, and whether he is yet alive; the question, when he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, whether this were their younger brother of whom they spake unto him; the words which then break from him, "God be gracious unto thee, my son!"; his inability any longer to command himself, because his bowels did yearn upon his brother, and his going apart to weep; and then, at last, when the crisis has come, the manner in which he discloses himself, and declares his identity, in all his lordly magnificence and power, with the stripling

whom they had sold so long before, and, in the full and gushing tide of unrepressed fraternal affection, flings himself freely into their arms; and then, in their trouble at his presence, his kind earnestness, his ingenious reasoning, to re-assure their spirits. Again, look at the moving plea of Judah, and his generous offer, dreading the effect upon their grey-haired father, to remain in bonds in the place of Benjamin, the full brother of Joseph himself, and the child to whom the heart of the father now especially clung. Or if we turn to the scenes in which the aged father is pictured to us himself, we may notice the struggles of his mind before he would consent to the departure of Benjamin, and that consent wrung from him at last by the stern necessity of the case, in the midst of sorrowful forebodings prompted by the remembrance of what was believed to have been the fate of Joseph, the once cherished child of his hopes.

We see from these few touches in what manner the domestic interests and individual affections of human life are portrayed to us in the Scriptures, and marvellously interwoven, since men are the agents, with that vast and continuous chain of Providence which grasps, here and for ever, the destinies of the race. Upon this point, however, we shall have occasion to fix our attention more particularly before parting with our subject: let us now look at some more familiar lessons which are suggested by different portions of the history.

The partiality, perhaps the undue, although not

undiscerning partiality, of Jacob for his son Joseph, appears to have conspired with some other circumstances, and particularly with the relation, from the mouth of Joseph himself, of those dreams by which the Almighty was pleased to signify the purpose of his future elevation,—to produce a strong feeling of envy and ill-will against him in the minds of his brethren, and to have created a kind of party in the family. And here is a lesson, not only for parents and children, and members of the same household, but for all persons who, in whatever way, are associated together in life and act in company, to beware of giving occasion for jealousy and offence, and, on the other side, of being drawn into combinations against any individual or individuals who, perhaps very innocently, have become obnoxious. The bad feeling once conceived in the heart, materials are never wanting to feed the flame: appearances are misconstrued; suspicions are formed and fostered; grievances are made out of nothing; jealousy, dislike, and aversion assume a more pronounced character from day to day; heart-burnings are indulged and aggravated in the private communications which pass between the members of the hostile party, till they are prepared for the first opportunity of mischief and wrong. The resentments which they have been nursing may not break out into crime; the circumstances of their position may forbid any such consequence; but the seeds of that hatred and malice are germinating in their hearts, which are accounted,—let all tremble to hear it who entertain

injurious grudges, or vindictive and rancorous sentiments against their neighbour,—which are accounted as murder in the sight of God. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer,"—a declaration remarkably exemplified in the issue to which the brethren of Joseph were led on in their irritated repudiation of his pretensions.

Let us learn, then, what devils in disguise are in the heart of man, and what need there is that they be expelled and supplanted by the Spirit of Grace and Love. If we are Christians, let us never for a moment forget that "this commandment have we from" Christ, "that he which loveth God, love his brother also,"—not only his brother who fraternizes with him in habits and sentiments and mutual acts of courtesy and kindness—for sinners also do as much as this,—no, it is every brother of the race, however disposed towards ourselves, that we are to love—regarding ourselves as the disciples of One Who rendered back blessing to those from whom He suffered an accursed doom, and as the children of that God Who continually and characteristically is kind and good to the unthankful and the evil.

The troubles of the life of Jacob—things which are linked closely with this portion of sacred history—afford also an instructive lesson. Jacob was a chosen servant of God: his name is associated with the names of Abraham and Isaac in the title and memorial which God proclaimed as His own throughout all generations: he was the father of the twelve patriarchs who founded

the tribes of Israel, and he was the progenitor of Christ. But in the deception practised in his youth upon his father, under the tuition of his other parent, —although in that very act the overruling hand of God was carrying out the purposes of His eternal wisdom,—Jacob had unquestionably committed a great sin; and the moral of the story appears in the sequel. The prophetic blessing took effect in the line of Jacob; but if we trace his own personal and individual history from the day when he fled in terror from the paternal roof,—after which his mother was never permitted to behold the face of her favourite again,—we see, although with a mixture of prosperous circumstances and frequent marks of a special protection from above, of what a series of hardships, vexations, and heart-rending afflictions a great portion of his life was made up, and what ample grounds he had to declare before Pharaoh that few and evil had been the days of his years upon earth.

We are by no means warranted to interpret all his trials as judgments for his early delinquency; his sin, no doubt, was forgiven, and his peace was made; but this we may note, that whereas he had imposed upon his father to the detriment of his elder brother, it was particularly in domestic life that he suffered anxiety and anguish of spirit. The same kind of principle was carried out which was exemplified in the sentence awarded against King David, that, as he had procured Uriah the Hittite to be slain by the sword, so the sword should never depart from his house.

There is too much disposition among men, in the

hour of their own prosperity, to forget the claims of those who have been their companions in the depression of their fortunes or in the struggles of human life : too much disposition to think no more of the debts of gratitude which they may owe, or the promises which they have freely made to persons whose wants, however great, are obscure, because they are obscure themselves. And this disposition is strongly instanced in the conduct of a high officer in the household of Pharaoh ; one whose mind had been relieved in prison by the power bestowed upon Joseph to interpret his dream, and upon whom Joseph had depended to make interest in his behalf. " Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him." Such is, as we familiarly speak, the way of the world. And such an experience of the world is apt, in minds which are strangers to the influences at once soothing and corrective of our holy faith, to produce sourness, misanthropy, and settled disgust. But the Christian, whatever oblivion of benefits he may encounter in the world, whatever disappointment of just expectations, whatever coldness and distance in quarters where he is entitled to countenance and favour and friendly regard, supports himself by the reflection that there is ONE Who does not *forget ;* One greater than man, Who never loses sight of the workmanship of His hands ; Who, in His boundless love, His unfathomable wisdom, and His omnipotent energy of power, pervades His entire creation throughout its details, so that it is declared of the very sparrows, however insignificant they may appear in our eyes, that

"not one of them is *forgotten* before God"; One Who stands pledged in Christ to the sinful children of the dust, if only they are believers; and little as their performances can, in themselves, be of benefit or value to Him, graciously declares that He is "*not unrighteous* to *forget* their work and labour which proceedeth of love," and Who records and requites the offering of faith, though it be in the form of two mites given by the hand of poverty, or a cup of cold water to refresh a brother for whom Christ died: One Who, though a woman may *forget* her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the fruit of her womb, yet will not *forget* the people whom He knows and owns—Who bids them to trust in Him, for He will never, never leave them nor forsake them.

The workings of remorse in the conscience, and the blessing which it is (if rightly improved) to men who have committed iniquity that they should be brought into straits and reduced to a condition of alarm and humiliation, are also pictured to us in a lively manner in the facts of this remarkable narrative. The brethren of Joseph are before him in their urgent need, seeking relief for the famine of their households. He puts on an air of roughness: professes a distrust of their character and object, and exacts, as a test, the hard condition that they should go back and bring their youngest brother from his father's side,—one of their number, in the mean time, being detained in confinement as a hostage. And then it is that they are prompted to say one to another—(it all passed in the

hearing of Joseph, whom they supposed not to understand their language)—"We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us." And it is brought home to them by Reuben; "Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore behold also his blood is required." So again, in the same consciousness of ill-desert, when, upon their homeward road, the money is found mysteriously restored in the sack of one of them, their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, "What is this that God hath done unto us?"

The checks which God gives us in our career of common worldliness and folly—the manner in which He brings up against us, by particular occurrences hardly to be mistaken, any notable transgression of which we have thought too lightly, or not thought at all, are among the chiefest of His mercies; for what is so dangerously stupid as a heart which does not know its own plague?—what other infatuation is so deplorable as an ignorance and blinded indifference about our own cankered spots which are eating into the life of our souls? Or where is there so fatal a sophistry as that by which men disguise to themselves the real malignity of those symptoms of which the existence is too palpable to be unperceived? My brethren, let none of us deal so with our own interest in eternity; and if we are newly touched, if we are awakened, if our eyes are

opened to our sinfulness, by any providential warning, and we turn at last to God, let us take heed that the work is genuine and complete; for we read—and it is a very common, but a very frightful and ruinous case—of those who when they were smitten by judgments, "turned them early and enquired after God; and they remembered that God was their strength, and that the high God was their Redeemer." A fair appearance this: a seeming promise of something permanently good. "Nevertheless they did but flatter Him with their mouth, and dissembled with Him in their tongue: for their heart was not whole with Him, neither continued they steadfast in His covenant."

We have glanced, in the earlier portion of these reflections, at that connected train of providential design in which the incidents of private and domestic life, and the changes affecting the plans and movements of particular families, were made subservient to those high and far-extended purposes of Divine wisdom for the benefit of the entire family of man, which are carried out into eternity itself. The little spring which oozes obscurely from the ground, enlarging and still enlarging itself in its progress, till, in a long and winding, but plainly traceable course, it is spread into a mighty and imposing stream, mixes itself at last with the interminable ocean. The promises were made to Abraham that his posterity should possess the land of Canaan, with which he had no original connexion, and that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. The grandson of Abraham is

the father of the twelve patriarchs: these patriarchs are the founders of that chosen and peculiar people from among whom, after the flesh, the Messiah was to spring: circumstances are ordained to befall in the family of Jacob, which, in their result, impress upon the history of that people in its early stage, even as it respects its secular features, such a character as to exhibit a perfect representation, point by point, of the achievements of Christ on behalf of the spiritual Israel. They are no random occurrences; it is no fortuitous succession of events that we trace; the agency of One supreme Mind, and One unswerving Will is discoverable throughout: the control of GOD is there; and the one great purpose promised from the beginning is kept steadily in view, both in the distribution of events to bring about the issue in its appointed time, and in the typical correspondence which we have just noticed between certain facts of a particular national history and the series of transactions in which we all have our part, as subjects of the dispensation of Grace. Our rescue from the base bondage of sin and the oppressive tyranny of Satan; our deliverance from the stroke of the destroyer by means of the sprinkled blood of the Lamb of God; our entrance through the sacramental element of water upon our journey through the wilderness of life; our march through that wilderness under guidance and direction vouchsafed to us from above; our victory over the enemies of our salvation, greater and mightier than ourselves, to be won under the banner of our

heavenly Joshua (for Joshua and Jesus, as most of us know, are one and the same name, varied in the passage from one language to another, and the Joshua of the Old Testament is called Jesus where he is mentioned in the New), and finally our establishment by the arm of the same spiritual leader, the Captain of our salvation, in the heavenly Canaan, the land of promise which lies beyond this wilderness in which we sojourn, —all these are points of correspondence too familiar and obvious to require that we should insist or enlarge upon them. And the way was paved, the train was laid, for all these typical occurrences—for the bondage, the exodus, and the establishment in Canaan, of the Israelitish people—the train was laid by means of the plots in the family of Jacob against his favourite child, and the subsequent famine which prompted their recourse to Egypt for relief.

But if we may thus run a parallel between the early history of God's ancient people and His dealings with the spiritual Israel throughout the world, it is well known that in a great multitude of other examples also,—whether in the rites and observances of the ceremonial law, or in the individual history of men eminent of old, as recorded in the Bible,—the greater things of the gospel of salvation and often the personal history of Jesus Christ Himself, in many of its leading particulars, were distinctly foreshadowed. And thus the unity of purpose diffused through the vast and complicated whole, and the operation of the hand of God shaping everywhere the course of things and causing

all to converge to one point, present themselves in a manner to rouse our feelings of interest, and, at the same time, to inspire a contemplative awe. The history of Joseph furnishes, under several different aspects, an instance in point.

Joseph, in the early indications of his future greatness, and of his designation to a high and special task, was very ill apprehended by those around him; but his father, we are told, "observed the saying:" Christ in His infancy and in His childhood excited a wonder, little accompanied by an intelligent reception of the truth; but His earthly parent "kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." Joseph, after a plot against his life, was taken into Egypt: Christ was carried into Egypt to escape the murderous intentions of King Herod. Joseph was hated of his brethren because, in obedience to the dictates of duty, he brought to his father their evil report: Christ was hated by the world because He testified of it that the works thereof were evil; we are told that "neither did His brethren believe on Him," and "His own received Him not." Joseph, on account of his preternatural wisdom in divine things, received the name of Zaphnath Paaneah, or, the man to whom secrets are revealed: Christ is He "in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Joseph is sold by his brethren; the price is counted out in pieces of silver; he appears in the form of a servant; he is arraigned as a criminal and made a prisoner, numbered with transgressors, associated with two malefactors, one of whom is pardoned and restored to favour, the other is

left to condemnation: in all these points, the coincidences with the case of Christ are what it is needless to indicate. Joseph is, subsequently,—observe, my brethren, in every single particular which now follows, the exact picture in the earthly occurrences of the life of Joseph, of sacred, spiritual, and heavenly things relating to the personal history, the acts, and the attributes of Christ the antitype,—Joseph is subsequently exalted to the highest honours, Pharaoh only in the throne being greater than he: Christ is highly exalted in His glorified human nature, and sits down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. All power is given to Joseph over the land of Egypt: all power is given to Christ in heaven and earth. They cry before Joseph, Bow the knee: we are told that, at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth. Joseph becomes the dispenser of bread, the restorer of life to perishing beings, and by his means the hungry are literally filled with good things: in what manner these expressions will apply to Christ (not to speak here of their literal propriety, if made to describe the miracles of the loaves), cannot fail to be immediately perceived;—to Christ, Who is Himself the Bread Which came down from heaven, and Who, imparting Himself to the souls of men, makes good His declaration that "they shall be filled" "who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Joseph was sent by God, in his own remarkable words, to save the lives of his brethren "by a great deliverance." How this is appropriate to the person of Christ, it must be equally superfluous to point out. Is

there not here, then, a portrait, in earthly lineaments, of Christ? and what though some points of resemblance which have been exhibited in tracing this parallel from beginning to end, should be regarded by any among us as unimportant or insufficiently made out—or what though the chronological order of the occurrences which it comprehends, is not always the same in the two cases—can we refuse to recognise the collective force and result of the compared particulars as a whole? Can we fail, if we contemplate the similar close correspondence, in circumstantial particulars, of the personal history of Isaac, of Moses, of Daniel, and other names of note in the Bible, with the personal history of Christ,—can we possibly fail to see that God was guiding all things to one grand issue, and that He stamped upon successive dispensations, as well the identity of His purpose as the demonstration of His supreme overruling power, ordering and directing the occurrences of this lower world, "after the counsel of His own will?"

There is one other point in common between Joseph and Him who was God, yet made Himself man for our sakes, that both were victorious in signal temptation. Christ, indeed, in this aspect, stands alone: He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. That cannot be said of any other who has ever appeared in human shape. It is precisely as to sinners that He stands in the relation to us of a Saviour, and is the sinless High Priest, and the spotless self-offered sacrifice which our case requires. But woe be to us if, in a false and perverted reliance upon this wonderful provision of

Divine mercy, we throw the reins loose to our sinful inclinations, or relax in our resistance of temptation. We are tempted in many ways and under many disguises every day. We are warned of our danger in the simple prayer given us by the Lord, and we are charged by Him to watch as well as pray, lest we "enter into temptation." Whatever would draw us away from maintaining a heavenly frame of mind, from habitually walking with God, from living "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," from strictly keeping "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men,"—whatever would suggest to us that we may venture to decline from this high standard, and would make us believe that we consult our happiness in doing so,—whatever, my brethren, would produce such effects as these upon our minds, is a temptation from the enemy of our souls. Never let us think that this or that deviation is a little thing, and can do us no great mischief. That is what Adam and Eve were persuaded to think when they put forth their hands to the forbidden fruit. "Holiness to the Lord" is the state of preparation in which a Christian should stand. No deviation from holiness is a light or little thing. But there are, perhaps, some among us solicited, and strongly solicited too, to acts of different kinds, so plainly forbidden, that if they sin, they must be said to sin with their eyes open. And if they are not so far gone in the road of ruin as to be abandoned to a course of sin and to glory in it, they plead the strength of the temptation, and think that this will serve for their excuse. O let them turn to the example of those

servants of God who have been enabled, through grace, to triumph over combined and violent temptations, and have been saved by the salutary remembrance of all which is enveloped in the question of Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against GOD?"

SERMON X.

THE CHOICE OF MOSES.

HEB. XI. 24, 25.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

THE early history of Moses, here placed in the Apostle's catalogue of those who have nobly exemplified the power of faith, is familiarly known. The particulars are gathered from the second chapter of Exodus, the seventh of the Acts of the Apostles, and the eleventh of the Epistle to the Hebrews. To save him from perishing by the cruel edict of Pharaoh, which commanded the slaughter, as soon as they were born, of all the male children of the Hebrews, he was, after being concealed for three months, committed in an ark of bulrushes to the river Nile,—left, as we should be apt to speak, to the mercy of the winds and waters, but rather to the mercy and protection of that God Who, in closely similar circumstances (of which these were, no doubt, ordained to be typical), knew how to deliver His own Son, the founder of the better covenant, from the rage of the sanguinary Herod.

The faith of the parents of Moses in this proceeding

is noted in the same honourable record in which his own is set before us. And we find that it was not disappointed. The child was discovered by the daughter of Pharaoh, who went down with her attendants to bathe in the river. The innocence of helpless infancy in such a situation, aided by the sweet aspect of the child (for this is intimated in the expression rendered in our Bible by the words, "a proper child"), appealed strongly to the feelings of nature. "When she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children." By the intervention of his sister, a Hebrew nurse was engaged, and under the gracious providence of God, he was thus restored to the arms of his own mother. His royal patroness continued to watch with interest over a being whom she had been instrumental in preserving: she provided for his education, so that he became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and adopted him as her son, an adoption which, according to the account of some ancient and modern writers, comprehended his nomination to succeed to the crown of Egypt, but which did certainly comprehend very high elevation and splendour, and open before him a very dazzling perspective.

These privileges were declined. This tempting and, in human estimation, most enviable position was refused. He turned from a prospect covered with all which could flatter his ambition, minister to his self-indulgence, or feed his worldly hopes, and cast his eyes upon the

afflicted people of God. And with a constancy unshaken by the contrast, he chose his portion with them. Without listening to any such suggestions of his own mind as that the same Almighty Hand which had been extended for his signal preservation had now met him in a more advanced point of his pilgrimage, and opened a way for him to befriend his countrymen, by means of his power and influence at court, he rejected the benefits which were within his grasp, and settled it with himself that he was reserved for another destiny, content to leave to the Divine providence and promise the future rescue of His people from their bondage. But why did he thus calculate and thus decide? Why, but because he saw that to profit any longer by the intentions of the princess would be to forsake his God? He must have identified himself with the corruptions of a wicked court and with the abominations of an idolatrous system of religion. Rather than thus "to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," he chose "to suffer affliction with the people of God."

We must admire the rectitude, and we ought to discern the wisdom, of his choice. For it is wisdom unhesitatingly to sacrifice the world to the calls of religious duty. It is wisdom to prefer the preservation of a conscience void of offence, though coupled with affliction and reproach, to all the smiling promise of pleasure, the indulgences of wealth, the parade of grandeur, the command of power. If the acquisition or the enjoyment of these partake of sin, it is folly, wretched folly, however harsh may be our alternative, to pursue

them. It is blindness to shun the "light affliction which is but for a moment," if, in shunning it, we endanger the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which it may contribute to work for us, and if we expose our souls to the peril of eternal condemnation. If "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" who believe in the salvation of Christ, it is a deplorable miscalculation to risk the loss of that hope in order to avoid some restraint, some self-denial, some exertion, some privation (all coupled, be it observed, with peace of conscience and comfort of soul) here below. If our belief be clear and steady, and we have not suffered our light to be dimmed by our immersion in the world, it is impossible that we should hesitate with such a choice presented to our minds. Faith is what we want. "By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Faith was the principle which prompted his decision and gave him power to resist the world. He felt the conviction that he should be no loser at the last by anything which he suffered or sacrificed for God and His religion; he knew that GOD "IS, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him;" and, more than this, we may be assured that, like Abraham, he rejoiced to see the day of Christ, and "saw it and was glad;" he beheld, through a lengthened vista, the glories of a better covenant, and recognising a personal interest in the scheme of redemption, he anticipated the unseen "recompense of reward." The Apostle tells us of Moses, that he esteemed "the

reproach of CHRIST greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." To those who consider the disproportion between eternity and time, and remember that they are certainly made to live for ever, nothing in this world can seem either too good to part with, or too hard to undergo, if that surrender or that endurance carry the evidence of their being heirs of glory in Christ. It was this which sustained the spirits of the primitive believers in all the varieties of persecution and martyrdom to which they were exposed,—this immovable persuasion and holy hope of unspeakable gain to be reaped hereafter through that Master Whom they loved and Who suffered and was glorified before them. Could our minds be so divested of their worldly integuments as to enable us to reason and to discriminate without bias, we should at once see and acknowledge that they who suffer for the truth of God, or who practise self-denial, forego worldly benefit, resist worldly inducement and influence from a sense of duty to Him, do not renounce their happiness, but place it out at interest upon terms more advantageous than this world can know; and we should be at a loss whether most to lament the sinfulness, or to compassionate the infatuation, of those nominal believers in Christ who, in fact, live without God in the world; who form all their decisions, lay all their plans in life, pursue all their interests and pleasures, without taking into their consideration the manner in which their eternal welfare may be affected; who eat and drink, build and plant, marry and are given in marriage, regardless of the flood of time fast mounting to

its mark, which will surprise them unprepared when it closes over their devoted heads.

These are considerations which derive much additional strength from our reflecting upon the mixture of bitter ingredients in all unsanctified enjoyment; the uncertainty of its continuance, the brevity at best of its duration, and the wretchedness of its issue. Let us take the example of men who unreservedly yield themselves up to enjoy the world, and to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, discarding wholly the restraints which are imposed by their duty to God, the care of their souls, the very thought of a world to come. Will they not often be found to verify the saying, that "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness"? Will they never be known secretly to suffer by a smothered consciousness of doing wrong, and to feel the worm which corrodes their enjoyment at the core? Will it not be sometimes seen that, in the words of a truly Christian poet,

> "Scripture is still a trumpet to their fears . . .
> That scruple checks them. Riot is not loud
> Nor drunk enough to drown it. In the midst
> Of laughter their compunctions are sincere,
> And they abhor the jest by which they shine."

The effect of the self-reproving voice may be evaded by some plausible sophistry, and the edge of remorseful feeling worn blunt by the habit of sinful indulgence, but it is only when men are abandoned to reprobate hardness of heart, that the power of these checks is wholly gone. Alas! there are sins which men admire

in themselves; excesses and deviations, and acts of irreligion, in which they glory; it is often unction to their self-love to think themselves men of pleasure and men of the world; and thus vanity and sinful indulgence play, as it were, into the hands of each other, and are mutually driven on. But suppose the fullest gratification of both—will any man calmly and soberly say that this is happiness? It is the delusion of a diseased fancy, the wild intoxication of an hour. No safe and unadulterated pleasure can spring from any source which is tainted in the least degree by sin. And however men may brave, in certain instances, the disapproving frowns of holiness, or sport in the alarms of purity and the remonstrances of religion, yet there are, as the case is put by one of our older divines, two painful and uneasy passions which attach themselves, in a manner at one day or other to be manifested, to every violation of the Law of God—the passions of shame and fear: shame, overpowered for the moment, but not extinguished, by the false shame of the world, and proceeding from the undefined apprehension of exposure to a dreaded eye; and fear, from the apprehension, however clouded or however remote, of punishment due to sin. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

But suppose that the pleasures of sin—that is, the enjoyment of life, whether more gross or more discreet, without reference to the service of God or the welfare of the soul—could be unalloyed; yet, according to the calculation of Moses, it is but "for a season." The pleasure of some sins expires in the very commission:

there are others which procure a return of worldly delight or advantage, less immediately fleeting in its nature:—but the fruits of *all* are utterly *precarious*, and liable to be exchanged for loss and pain. Concede, however, another supposition—suppose them secured for the date of life: what is that to beings who know that they have an immortal part? What is this life,—which is proverbially a dream, a shadow, "a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away,"—to those who are conscious that, beyond it, they enter upon an existence which knows no end? What can it be but madness to hazard our condition in that hereafter, for the sake of anything here? When we pass hence into the world of spirits, it will avail us but little to have revelled in the abundance of good things or to have dazzled our neighbours by our distinctions and advantages in the world below. All mankind will be set upon a level before the judgment-seat of God: the marks and discriminations of different classes in human society were made only for this world, and will cease with their occasion: the only remaining distinction will be that by which God "will discern between the righteous and the wicked;" between those that serve Him and those that serve Him not; between the lovers of God and the lovers of their own pleasure. Oh, how infinitely greater will be that difference, how infinitely more marked that separation than any which now exist between the highest and the meanest of mankind. "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot:

neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." "The Angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire."

The indulgences, then, which men find it so hard to forego, are at best only of value in this passing world, and bear no price at all in that country where we are to live for ever; nor, if it were otherwise, could we then transport them with us. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Naked we came into it, and naked we shall go out. The proud occupier of palaces, the lord of vast domains, will soon have no other portion in the earth than the narrow grave. "Be not thou afraid though one be made rich, or if the glory of his house be increased. For he shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him." The guilt alone which may have been contracted in the pursuit of worldly gain or pleasure will adhere to his unhappy soul, if it have not been washed in the blood of the Lamb. Oh, but when we speak of guilt, and depravity, and stains to be wiped away, and pardon needed for miserable sinners, what is all this to those who preserve an unblemished character, and are excellent friends and neighbours, and disdain every dishonourable practice, abhor every atrocious proceeding? This is what some men cannot understand. They are not in a state to understand it. They are lulled in a pernicious security about the concerns of their immortal souls: they are enveloped in an uncertain twilight with regard to spiritual things:

the way which they tread they know not—yet they carelessly and unconcernedly tread on: they walk perhaps upon the verge of destruction and wander in bewildering and deceitful paths, but they have company in their danger, and that is enough; they are countenanced by the practice of the world, and that suffices for consolation. They believe that there is a place called Heaven and another of which the name is Hell: they know extremely well that there is a Bible declaring the will of God, and proclaiming a Saviour Who came into the world: they think it a duty to attend public worship, and they are not aware of anything which they have done,—or at least which they continue to do,—constituting any outrage upon these principles or seeming to threaten ruin to their souls. But, merciful Heaven! do they consider for what CHRIST the Son of God came into the world and died, and what state they are in by nature from which He came to rescue them; and how they can assume to themselves and how preserve alive that *close connexion* with *Him* which must be *essential* to their safety, if it was necessary for Him to interpose at all? Where is their fixed, their serious, their deep impression of these truths, which if they are truths, are truths so surpassingly, so unspeakably momentous? Where are the signs of their having any real fear of God before their eyes, any love to Him kindled within their hearts? Where are the marks of their having "put on Christ;" of their being "renewed in the spirit of" their minds; of their having set their "affection on things above;" of their regarding themselves as "fellow-

citizens with the saints and of the household of God;" of their feelingly recognising the fact that they are "bought with a price," and the principle that "if One died for all, they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again"? How does it appear that they are sensible of the necessity of working out their "salvation with fear and trembling," and aware at the same time that "it is God that worketh in" them "both to will and to do"? Can they be so deluded as to suppose that they are not to be excluded from the rewards of the believer, because they have avoided that description of wickedness from the temptations to which they have been exempt? Labour and warfare are the lot of the Christian: *he* knows not what his religion is who knows not this: labour and warfare are his lot: prayer and communion with God through Christ are his resource and his solace, and God Himself is his strength: one field is assigned to one man, another to another, but work to all: even if there can be a condition in which there is none abroad, he finds it within the folds of his own breast.

> "His warfare is within: there unsubdued
> His fervent spirit labours; there he fights,
> And there obtains fresh triumphs o'er himself."

To those who are content with the negative sort of Christianity—the good, easy kind of religion to which some of our remarks have been directed—it is well to propose the question, to urge rather their proposing it to their own hearts, whether they have the principle within which would prevail over the world, in the fiery

trial? or how they would have chosen, with the alternative which was placed before Moses, or before a greater than Moses—Christ in His human nature—to Whom all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, were offered for one single act of forbidden homage? My brethren, we have, in fact, all of us, some choice set before us which so far partakes of the same character as to furnish a test of our spiritual state. Every day, in some shape or other, the world or the flesh is found coming in competition with the love of God; every day, right and wrong are offered to us together—the former distasteful, the latter agreeable, to our natural inclinations. How do we decide? Whom do we choose to serve? The question involves tremendous consequences. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the WHOLE WORLD and lose his own soul?" And if the earthly prevail over the spiritual principle, in their common and almost unobserved opposition, then it is easy to see on which side the victory would incline, if severe struggles were to come. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

SERMON XI.

THE THREEFOLD WITNESS IN EARTH.

1 St. John V. 8.

And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

We can hardly enter upon the consideration of these words without noticing the circumstance of their standing in conjunction with a celebrated text declaratory of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, to which they bear a strict correspondence of parts, and from which they seem naturally to spring. "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." *That* text, it is well known, constituting the seventh verse of the chapter, has been the subject of controversy with reference to its genuineness—a controversy, however, not involving any danger to the maintenance of that high, sacred, and fundamental doctrine which it declares, because the doctrine is most abundantly established by other means, and it is a controversy with which we are not here immediately concerned. There is no dispute about the words, "There are three that bear record, or

witness,"—(we have translated the word in the seventh verse, bear *record,* and in the eighth, bear *witness,* but in the original it is in both instances the same)—"There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood." About *these* words there is no dispute.

This, then, is the declaration which, in all humble supplication that we may view it in a right and profitable manner, it is now proposed to consider. We do not mean, however, dogmatically to assert the exclusive correctness of the interpretation to be here offered. There are many texts of Scripture susceptible of different explanations, and this is one, perhaps, more than ordinarily obscure. However simple may be the Word of God in all essential points of belief and practice, it furnishes matter, in other instances, for the exercise of research and argumentative discussion, serving to quicken our interest, to stimulate our curiosity, to obviate the stagnation apt to be engendered by an undisturbed and uniform acquiescence, and to engage in the highest of all studies the powers and attainments by which we investigate, compare, and form our legitimate conclusions. To assist and lead the way in these enquiries is one of the duties attaching to the Ministry of the Church, "the witness and keeper of Holy Writ," appointed not to have dominion over the faith of the laity, but to be the helper of their joy. We must always, however, approach our subject with reverential steps, and keep within safe and well-understood bounds, avoiding every sort of forced or fanciful exposition in

adaptation to preconceived and favourite ideas of our own. The light in which it will be endeavoured to set the passage now before us will, it is hoped, be consistent with these rules of proceeding; and the interpretation given will, at least, be one which exhibits truths directly connected with the objects of the text.

Who, then, or what are the three witnesses described as the SPIRIT, the WATER, and the BLOOD? They may be regarded in more than one light. First, under a more general aspect and in a more unrestrained application; and next as standing and perpetual public witnesses existing before our eyes in a precise tangible shape, and unintermittingly exhibited before the world. In this *latter* point of view they may be taken to describe the inspired Scriptures and the two sacraments of our religion. Respecting the *Spirit*, indeed, we can have no possible difficulty or hesitation in pronouncing that this witness is God the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost has taken the character of a *witness* in many ways. God is said to have borne *witness* to the first planters of the faith, "both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and *gifts of the Holy Ghost.*" "There are diversities of gifts," says the Apostle Paul, "but the same Spirit;" and after a specific enumeration of these various gifts, he adds, "but all these worketh that One and the self-same *Spirit*, dividing to every man severally as He will;" a text intimating very distinctly the personality and the peculiar and appropriate energy of the Holy Ghost. With reference to the miracles of the Lord Himself, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the *Holy Ghost*

and with power," and according to the most received, and what appears the most natural, interpretation, the *blasphemy* against the *Holy Ghost* is nothing else than the ascription to infernal agency of miraculous operations performed by the communication of that Divine Spirit from above. The *witness* thus yielded to the truth of God does not require to be pointed out. It was most conspicuously in this sense, that the proclamation of the Faith came "in *demonstration* of the *Spirit* and of power." A blaze of glorious prodigy *testified* to the divine source of the new religion; and in the miracle, in particular, of the day of Pentecost, the visible descent of the Spirit upon the Apostles at once constituted in itself a proof of divine agency, and afforded to those who received the gift of tongues the means of testifying abroad over the world the Revelation of God.

Another exemplification of the witness of the Spirit is that internal testimony in the breast of man which was unquestionably within the view of the Apostle in our text, since it is almost immediately that he adds the words, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the *witness* in himself." Viewed, therefore, in this connexion, these last-cited words correspond exactly to the declaration of another Apostle, that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Not, in these days, by any manifestations which God makes of Himself to the soul, such as those in which He revealed Himself to the saints of old who acted under the impulse and guidance of inspiration—not in the way of sensations, or impressions, or illumi-

nations, perceived at the moment to come directly from heaven—*that* is what we are not taught nor warranted to expect. Our faith must be content to dispense with such communications, and must repose upon other grounds; and men often most dangerously deceive themselves and others by substituting what is, in fact, an alloy of gross and carnal excitement for the spiritual influences to which they lay special and perhaps exclusive claim. But apart from all rash and presumptuous extravagance, the believer has "an unction from the Holy One;" and it is by virtue of this that he knows Whom he has believed—knows "that HE is able to keep that which" he has "committed unto Him against" the last day. He has felt the adaptation of the Gospel of mercy to his case; he has found that it is "the power of God unto salvation," supplying, what nothing else can supply, the wants of his immortal soul, and healing, what nothing else can heal, the wounds which have been made in that soul by sin. He clasps its glorious promises to his bosom to sustain him in all the trials and temptations of the flesh. He discerns them as having a character in themselves which does not belong to the things of this world. He traces effects upon his own heart and life which he knows are not the work of human influence or natural reason, nor the issue from any deceiving source; and although the inward comforts of a true faith may differ much in different men, and in the most favoured cases the believer will have many alternations of discouragement, many occasions of self-abasement, many roughnesses to endure and evil

blasts to encounter, while in this corruptible body,—yet he goes on his way rejoicing, since he carries the deep and unshaken conviction that, through the free and boundless grace of his God, he is numbered among those who are children, adopted and maintaining their adoption in the Gospel; "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

The fruits of the Spirit afford *witness*, also, in another way—in their effect upon man. The character which is formed by this Divine influence constitutes a forcible recommendation of the faith, and yields testimony in the eyes of all thinking men to its having come out from God. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." We see how often it is urged upon the believers, in the Apostolic writings, to have an eye, in cultivating and cherishing the graces of the Spirit, in their temper and demeanour and dealings with other men, to the benefit of the holy cause—the Christian character fairly exhibited carrying upon the face of it a convincing appeal to every accessible mind.

But there is another testimony afforded by the Spirit—one of a supreme importance and of a specific and tangible kind. "The *testimony* of Jesus is the *Spirit of Prophecy*," and this, in a larger sense of the word, comprehends the whole Bible, the book of the Spirit. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." "Holy men of old"—the writers of Scripture are the persons intended—"spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "David, *in Spirit*, calleth Him Lord"—"the Holy Ghost saith"—"the Holy Ghost this signifying"—these

are familiarly the modes of expression in which passages from the Old Testament are cited in the New. The Bible, therefore, proceeds from the Holy Ghost. When the Bible speaks, the Holy Ghost speaks. Just as we say indifferently, in making reference to the writings of men, that such a *work* testifies, or its *author* testifies, to such or such effect. And the Holy Ghost, through this medium, is a *witness*, not only as the Bible is a declaration to the world of the will, works, and dispensations of God, not only as it conveys information to man in things divine, but in the sense of direct and irresistible proof. It carries the stamp of divinity upon its face, and cannot be looked at, unless where the mental vision is disordered and obscured, without the recognition of its exalted claims. It is needless to point out what proof is rendered, what testimony is spread before us by *prophecy* in the more strict and confined acceptation of the term. Take only the example of those predictions relating to the person of Jesus Christ: trace Him in the early promise to our fallen parents—in the shadowed but unequivocal resemblances of historical incident—in the exact correspondence of type and antitype exhibited by the ritual observances of the Mosaic law—in the minute and particularizing delineations of the prophetic books: go with Him where He leads you, as He led His dull and dispirited disciples in the walk to Emmaus, when, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself;" and will not your hearts burn within you, as

He is there distinctly developed to your minds? Listen to the Apostle Peter: "Ye have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." Oh glorious, but too often despised, Book of God! how will its forgotten lessons, its unheeded warnings, its rejected pleadings of love tell, in the last day, against its professed disciples, who have heard them with their ears and had them in their hands. My brethren, if we compare with the solemn predictions of Scripture respecting the indications of an approaching *day of the Lord*—an expression not limited to one only day,—the aspect, recent or within easy memory among living men, of affairs in the world; the convulsive heavings of human society; the shaking of the powers of heaven (*i. e.* the powers constituted by the decree of heaven to rule on earth); the pestilences, famines, commotions in divers places and rumours of war which, long rumbling in distant echoes, are found to burst at length in an ominous collision of all the elements of terror —shall we not, without presumptuously and hardily pronouncing upon the details of unaccomplished prophecy, yet feel ourselves called upon, as by a voice from heaven, to watch the signs of the times and to prepare for a great crisis which may be at hand in the destinies of the race? Shall we not earnestly endeavour to assure our portion where it is independent of the changes of this lower world? and shall we not learn to cast our care upon God and to entrench ourselves with holy confidence in the recollection that, in the

words of the 99th Psalm, as translated in the Prayer-book, "The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient; He sitteth between the cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet." Let us leave the issue of things in His hands, believing that, whether for individuals, for the public, for our country, or for the world, He can bring light out of darkness, and cause the most threatening appearances — or, if it be so ordered, the most terrible struggles—to issue in glorious and blessed results.

We see, then, in what methods the Spirit bears witness in earth: by the display of power in the days of miracle; by the inward testimony of the bosom in which the love of God is shed abroad; by the external testimony of effects upon the character and life, causing our light to shine before men; and by the voice of inspiration in the Bible.

The *water* also bears witness upon earth. Let us take this statement in its plain literal sense. Literal water will be found in more than one way to bear the kind of *witness* here in our contemplation. "This is He," says the Apostle, in words shortly preceding our text, "that came by *water and blood,* even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." Now let it be remembered that this same St. John, who was present at the crucifixion of our Lord, attaches apparently, in his narrative of that event, a particular importance and interest to the fact—furnishing, medically and anatomically considered, the proof of actual death—that *water* issued together with the *blood* from the side

of Christ when pierced with the spear; and he tells us that he that saw it, *i.e.* this Apostle himself, *bare record* (again the same word in the original, which in our present text is rendered *bear witness*), and his record, or witness, "is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." Then let us put all this together, and the most obvious understanding which presents itself of what is said respecting the water in our text, will surely be *this*—that the Apostle speaks with a reference to *that same water* in connexion with *that same blood.* That water, however, had also an emblematical signification; it represented the washing away of sin in the "fountain opened" "for sin and for uncleanness;" the cleansing of the soul from the imputation of guilt by the atonement of Christ, and its purification from the love of sin; its transformation to holiness by the action of the living waters of grace. The literal *water of baptism* has precisely the same meaning; it is appointed as a sensible representation of the process which, by the grace of the gospel, takes effect upon the soul, and moreover, as a sacrament, it seals and ratifies our admission to the privileges of our faith. To this ordinance of God, therefore, connected with the conveyance of spiritual benefits, and carrying the lesson of spiritual renovation, we may well suppose that the expression of our text emphatically refers. It refers to that of which the Lord declares Himself, that "except a man be born of *water* and of the *Spirit,* he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." In order to our attainment of the blessings of the new covenant, the use, in

devout and humble faith, of the outward and visible sign ordained by Christ, must open the way for the sanctifying influences which are to be poured in upon the soul from above, and which renew the inner man day by day. If Christ had never instituted any such sacrament as that of baptism, then we should be obliged to have recourse to some different interpretation of these passages; but with the ordinance of baptism by water before our eyes, as solemnly commanded by Him, and constituting one of the features of the Christian religion, it would seem strange to suppose that these particular expressions should be chosen if they included no allusion of the kind.

In the same manner it may be reasonably believed that the *blood,* which is mentioned in conjunction with the water, while it is primarily the blood itself which, together with water, was shed upon the cross, is also to be regarded as the instituted memorial of that blood-shedding,—a part of the sacrament, by a well-known figure of speech, being put for the whole. The blood of sprinkling at the death of the Son of God, the victim for our sins, *bore witness* once for all. Christ Himself was the prince and leader of martyrs, and the term *martyr* signifies simply a *witness;* it is hence that it has been taken to denote one who is *eminently* a *witness* by sealing his testimony with his blood. The blood of Christ, Who, in the words of St. Paul, "before Pontius Pilate *witnessed* a good confession," sealed that glorious testimony which was the object of His coming upon earth. "To this end was I born and for this cause

came I into the world, that I should *bear witness* unto the truth." But before He became a martyr, He ordained a memorial of His martyrdom,—an actual conveyance, indeed, to the soul, if received in faith, of the effect and blessing of that divine sacrifice, but also, what is more to our immediate purpose, an exhibition, through all ages of the world, of our belief in His martyrdom, and our reliance upon it for salvation. "This do in remembrance of Me. This cup is the new testament in My blood. As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death *till He come.*"

This, then, as well as the other sacrament, is a standing *witness,* in all perpetuity, upon earth. Among the *Jews,* the *initiatory rite* of circumcision and the *commemorative* observance of the Passover—the latter referring to all the particulars of their typical deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, and prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ,—were at once badges of their covenant with God, and institutions which *bore testimony,* from generation to generation, to *facts* in their earlier history. Among *Christians,* who are exempted from the weight of Jewish ordinances, and who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, we yet find the simple *initiatory* rite of baptism, and the solemn *retrospective* observance of that same sacrifice upon the cross to which the Jewish paschal celebration *prospectively* pointed; and these Christian ordinances are to *us* at once badges of our covenant with God, and institutions which *bear witness* to *facts* upon which our system is built. There they are—handed down from age to age in the Church—a

sacrament of common water; a sacrament of common bread and wine. Trace them to their origin—how did they begin? how did they come to be received and honoured? who instituted them, and for what object? What do they mean? what do they represent? The answers to these questions, which we can all furnish, will immediately show that the sacramental water and the representation of the blood of Christ in the sacramental wine are ordained and decreed, while the world lasts, to *bear witness* to the grand truths of our religion. And thus, although there are other ways also (as we have seen) in which the Spirit, and the water, and the blood may be shown, at different times, to have borne or to be bearing witness in earth, yet if we look for the standing fulfilment of the declaration in an unbroken series, in a continuous line, among the ordinary and public provisions of our religion, by the three means of testimony, acting in conjunction, which are indicated in our text, we must rather fix upon the inspired Word of God, together with the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as signified respectively by the Spirit, the water, and the blood, than upon any other objects upon which our conjecture can light. And do not these three *agree in one?* Do they not all converge to one point? Do they not all tend to the establishment and support of one system, the system of faith in salvation by Christ alone? What but this only hope of sinners does the *Spirit* reveal in promise, in type, in prophecy, in warnings to flee from the wrath to come, in the evangelical narratives of facts fulfilling

what was foretold in the earlier volume, in the doctrinal writings of the Apostolic body? What else does the *water* of baptism either teach us in figure or assure to us in privilege? "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins. Know ye not that so many of us as are baptized into Jesus Christ are baptized into His death?" What else is held out to us in the consecrated "cup of salvation," containing the lively emblem of the *blood* of Christ which cleanseth us from all sin? These three agree in one. They agree in testifying to that great and everlasting reality of achievement by Christ, which, if we use these means aright upon earth, will form the subject of our song in heaven: "Unto HIM that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to HIM be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

SERMON XII.

THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD.

St. John XIV. 29, 30, 31.

And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do.

The Evangelist St. John has left us a large and full account of the instructions and encouragements given by our Lord Jesus Christ to His Apostles, in the memorable scene which immediately preceded His sufferings and death. It extends through several chapters, and is wound up by the prayer which occupies the whole of the seventeenth, and than which there is nothing of deeper interest in Scripture. In the midst of the conversation which introduces this prayer, we find the passage which has been now chosen for the subject of our reflections. Let us weigh these words of Christ, which, by the aid of the Divine Spirit, may carry important lessons to our hearts. It was by that Spirit that the Apostles were taught, and that all things were brought to their remembrance whatsoever *Christ had said unto them:* it is by the same influence breathed upon us that, without looking for miraculous direction or sensible communications, we must truly discern and

effectually lay to heart whatsoever we find to have proceeded from Him, either in the record of His own personal sayings or in the whole range of His holy Word. In the exercise of their *ordinary* powers, with minds rightly impressed, under the influence here described, the disciples, upon different occasions, are stated to have called to remembrance the things spoken by Christ, or written of Him in prophecy, when they witnessed the fulfilment of them after His death, and to have then made the proper application of them. This is precisely what, upon the occasion now before us, He declares to have been His object in view. "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe."

Look back, then, my brethren, making the case your own, upon all which *has come to pass* since those words were spoken—words which refer immediately to the intimation just before given of His approaching departure to the Father, and its consequences. Are we not personally concerned in all this? Have we not a property in all that has happened to Christ since the moment here in question? Did He not die for our sins, and rise again for our justification? Did He not, in re-ascending to heaven, go before to prepare a place for us, that where He is, there we may be also? Is not the Holy Spirit, who was bestowed as an effect of His being glorified, a Comforter to abide with us for ever, promised not only to the first believers, but to their children and to all that were "afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call?" Are not the sacraments

instituted in perpetuity as the seals of the covenant, the badges of our Christian profession, the appointed vehicles of grace to our souls? And is not one of these sacraments, besides its other characteristics, an express memorial of the Redeemer Himself, a thing to be done *in remembrance* of Him; a thing only to be left undone if we wish to forget Him, if we repudiate the memory of what He suffered for us? Has not this "Gospel of the kingdom," which was to be preached to "all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," this everlasting Gospel ordained to be proclaimed to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, long centuries ago reached the land of our fathers, and numbered us, in external privilege and in capacity of salvation, among the people of God? Is it not, instead of being in heaven, that we should send up for it there, or beyond the sea, that we should have it brought to us from thence, made very nigh to us, and thoroughly familiar in our hands, and mouths, and minds? Have not all these things of which we read been fulfilled for our benefit, and made good in our behalf? If they have so *come to pass*, then for what have they come to pass? They have come to pass in the accomplishment of prophecy and promise, *that we might believe*—not that we might indolently acquiesce in the received system of religion and leave the truths of the Gospel undisputed; but that we might "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ" and "be saved:" that we might "flee from the wrath to come" to that only Refuge, and grasp that salvation to our grateful bosoms, in the deep and homefelt conviction—the con-

viction of sinners delivered by a train of wonders wrought by the right hand of Omnipotent Love—that there is no other Name, that there are no other means, under heaven whereby we can be saved at all.

"Hereafter," adds our Lord, "I will not talk much with you: for *the prince of this world* cometh:" the hour was fast advancing which was to close His own earthly career, the hour of which He said when it came, in addressing Himself to those who were acting under the instigation of Satan, "This is *your* hour, and the *power of darkness.*" The intervening time was very short, and He could not talk much with them; they were to pay the more heed to the precious words which were then dropping from His lips, and to gather them as pearls, to be preserved with care. Brethren, the time is short for us all to treasure up the truths of our salvation, and to turn to account the religious advantages which we enjoy. The last hour is swiftly coming upon ourselves; the little opportunity of a transient and uncertain life is ebbing away: to-morrow, to-night may see any one of us, for what we know, stretched upon the bed of death; at best a few years, which will fly like those before them, now irrecoverably gone, will conduct us to that solemn issue. Are we profiting by the sacred instructions of our Lord? have His sayings sunk into our ears? have we heard and understood? have we heard these sayings of His and done them? have we practically applied them, and are we ruled by them, formed after them? Then, indeed, we are like unto the wise man, who built his house upon a rock, and we

are prepared to abide the tempest and the flood. But if we hear these sayings of Christ and do them not; if we are trifling away, in unprofitable vanities, the little space of our existence here; if we are filling it up by the unvarying and absorbing pursuit of the cares and the riches and the pleasures of this life; if, with eternity to provide for, and with the warnings of the Book of God before our eyes, we are making "provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof,"—then we have built upon a foundation which cannot stand. We raise expectation upon expectation, and throw out project after project, but all rests upon a shifting and treacherous reliance, and at last our structure falls. Our hopes are immediately ruined. Great is the fall thereof. Great, indeed, is the fall of a human soul, sparkling with reason and the consciousness of immortality, and set, by receiving revelation, in the midst of the lights of heaven itself: it is a star shot from the firmament to merge in "the blackness of darkness for ever."

The powers of that darkness, however, have a prodigious and woeful sway in this lower world. Men sin, and suffer, and die, and are coffined up for the worm; and these effects proceed from the energy of mischief, which began to work in Paradise, and works on till the consummation of all things in the day which God has ordained. Amidst all the grandeur of creation; amidst all the loveliness of nature; amidst all the boundless exhibition of wonders which encircles us, redundant with the proofs of eternal goodness and wisdom, we see also, in the wide-spread and glaring evidences of moral

and natural evil, under all their variety of forms, the ceaseless activity of a malignant influence. There is a single historian of the fifth century, the title of whose work, consisting of seven books, may serve to exemplify our present point respecting the aspect and condition of the world. It is entitled "Human Misery," and is stated to contain "an account of the wars, plagues, earthquakes, floods, conflagrations, thunder and lightning, murder and other crimes, which had happened from the beginning of the world." And can we read the history of any single country upon earth, of which the pages will not, with deeper or fainter characters of aggravation, tell us the same tale as makes up the materials of these seven books? And in all this mixture, in all this diversified mass of evil, how prominent everywhere is the evil of sin! how marked are the evidences of a vitiated nature in man! how multiplied the instances of a perverse infatuation, or of a revolting debasement of mind! Consider the stupidity of heathen idolatry—the monstrous objects of worship, senseless objects, which millions of the human family, verifying the words that "they that make them are like unto them, and so are all they that put their trust in them," are themselves actually so senseless as to adore; the only exercise of intellect appearing in the ingenuity which is often applied to make them in the utmost conceivable degree hideous and disgusting. Consider the filthiness and the cruelty attaching in very many examples to their religious rites. Consider the oppressions of the powerful, with means of blessing

in their hand, which are to be witnessed upon earth, and look at the degradation of the low: contemplate all the scenes of bloated pride, of bestial sensuality, of destructive intemperance, of profligate lust, of infuriate anger, of deadly hatred, of unrelenting revenge: survey all the instances of wily deception, of selfish rapacity, of unscrupulous aggression, of unprincipled fraud. Turn to those countries which exhibit the fairest picture of the state of man, and in which the eye may most readily rest upon scenes of peace and health and prosperity, the enjoyment of liberty and equal laws, the progress of improvement and the benignly ameliorating effects of our holy religion: yet there, if under this smiling face of things we explore all the realities of life, if we penetrate all the details of human society, how much wickedness and how much misery will be brought to light! Is there a day in which, in any considerable and dense population, we do not see the mourners go about the streets? is there a street in which there is not some fellow-creature stretched upon the bed of sickness? is there a house in which there is not, if not some violence of passion or agony of grief, yet some discomposure of spirit and vexation of heart? Is there an hour, is there a moment, in which God is not insulted all around us? In this city of Quebec, how many persons do we suppose that there are leading an infamous life? how many drunkards? how many swearers? how many Sabbath-breakers? how many hardened adepts in dishonesty? how many fraudulent dealers, equally dishonest and with less excuse? And look at the

refined, and, in the eye of the world, correct circles of society ; look at them as made up of professed Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, redeemed by the purchase of His blood out of a corrupted world, possessed with the high aspirations which ought to belong to the believer, and, as they ought to be seen, in full training for the inheritance of glory,—what inconsistency, what worldliness, what frequent and palpable violation of the Christian temper of humility and love, what devotion to the vanities of life, what specious disguises of self-interest, what languor and backwardness in religion, what alienation from spiritual views, what a disposition to start aside, like a broken bow, from the demands of a holy and elevated faith, what a desire to accommodate the Gospel and the whole system and observances of the Church to the ways of the world !

But it is needless to proceed further, and in fact it would be endless to accumulate the exemplifications of an evil and mysterious ascendancy in the world which we inhabit, and under which "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together." Enough has been said to explain and justify the language of Scripture in representing the actual subjugation of mankind to this influence, and describing the author of these effects as the "prince of this world," by which name he is indicated upon different occasions by the mouth of Christ, and "the god of this world," which title is given to him by St. Paul, who also calls him "the prince of the power of the air," because he and his emissaries having a personal, although a spiritual existence, there

is a locality in their operations, and they range unseen in the atmosphere which we breathe, "going to and fro in the world, and walking up and down in it." And it is to relieve us from the curse of this influence that Christ came into the world. He is the promised Seed of the woman, Who was to bruise the serpent's head. He came "to destroy the works of the devil." He went about, in the days of his flesh, "doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil."

My brethren, it is thus that we stand between two conflicting powers, to fall a prize either to the one or to the other. If we escape from an evil world and take refuge beneath the wings of Christ, He is "able to save to the uttermost," and to bruise Satan under our feet. If, either in their smoother or more broadly repulsive forms, we fall in with and follow the ways of that evil world, then we must be numbered among the children of the wicked one, and cannot have our portion with the children of God. And there is one very unquestionable test of our state: "In *this* the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God."

"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." This was the language of Christ, who, although for the execution of His task He assumed the nature of mortal man, and voluntarily surrendered Himself to the stroke of death, was exempt in His own person from all shade of moral taint, and therefore not obnoxious to the sentence of death, which came by sin, and which is the

work of the devil. In the language of the Apostle, "Forasmuch, then, as the children (the children whom Christ recognises as His own) are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." This meritorious death, made efficacious for the life of others, was not like the forfeiture of life by the sinner, under the original sentence: there was no personal guiltiness in the case to contract a liability to death, and it is thus that "the prince of this world," who had the power of death, "had nothing in Him." In the judicial process held upon Him by man, His innocence is manifest: "I find no fault in Him: I have found no cause of death in Him; I am innocent of the blood of this just Person," is the language of His judge who surrenders Him to the violence of His enemies; and it is said of those enemies themselves, that "though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain." So with reference to the moral causes which, in their physical consequence, render all human beings *naturally* subject to that death of which Satan is the author, the man Christ Jesus was equally clear and free. He died, be it remembered by all of us, "the *just for the unjust*, that He might bring us to God." It was to make the due manifestation of His entire conformity to the will of God, and of His perfect and unhesitating discharge of the part which He sustained as the suffering Saviour of the world, that He gave Himself up to death; it was in fulfilment of the prophetic words,

"Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required: then said I, Lo I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God:" it was, as He tells us in the words of our text, "That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do." Even so the blessed Saviour did, and even so must we, faithfully, and, according to the measure of our weak ability, fully do, if we would evince ourselves to be the true followers of our Lord, and heirs, through Him, of the kingdom of heaven. We must learn to practise the most unreserved obedience to the commandments of God, and the most unqualified submission to His will, in whatever trials and temptations may await us below. If we refuse to deny ourselves and to take up our cross, we cannot be His disciples. It is to be feared that too many of us are self-deceived in these matters; and that is an awful case of self-deception, which concerns the state and preparation of our souls before God. We really do not, in too many instances, remember what we were made for, nor how we are filling our part, nor how responding to the love of our God and Saviour. Men abandon themselves, without scruple, without uneasiness, without apparent consciousness of any inconsistency or any danger, into the arms of the world; men who receive as their authority that book which declares that "the friendship of the world is enmity against God," and that "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." We must use this world, but we must use it as not abusing it; as not misunderstanding the nature

of our connexion with it; as not making it our home. We must be thankful for earthly blessings; but we must watch and pray against their becoming a snare to our hearts. To the Christian the kingdom of heaven is the "one pearl of great price;" and "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" his Lord, that for which he is ready to "count all things but loss."

SERMON XIII.

PRAYER.

St. Luke XVIII. 1.

He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

The parable which He spake unto them was that of the unjust judge who yielded to the importunity of the widow; and the more particular lesson which it conveys is that of perseverance and urgency in prayer. The subject, however, is not so presented to us as to confine our reflections upon prayer to this single point of view. Leaving, therefore, the necessity of closeness and perseverance to form one of the branches of our general subject, let us proceed to consider at large the duty and benefits of prayer; and, in the first place, the reasons upon which it is founded.

To those who have made any advances in a religious course of life, or who are even seriously endeavouring to do so, it cannot be necessary to prove the point itself, that it is right for the reasonable creature to pray to his Creator. But there are doubts and objections which may, possibly, in some minds, make it a question; and these we will endeavour to dispose of, in the threshold of our argument.

The particular doubts and objections to which I advert, are such as are founded upon the insignificance

and unworthiness of man, or upon the attribute of goodness united with omniscience and omnipotence in God.

How can I think of addressing God?—it is in this shape that the former class of objections may be put—How can I presume to think myself—one frail, wandering, offending member of this perishing family of mankind, these children of the dust, born to-day and gone to-morrow, tenants of this globe of earth, which, however vast in our eyes, is but a speck in the universe of creation—how can I venture to think myself authorized to speak to Him Who dwelleth in eternity, to forget the immeasurable distance at which I stand from Him, and attempt to draw near to God Who is clothed in unapproachable light? What warrant have I to hold direct personal communication with that awful Being Who 'sitteth in the heavens over all from the beginning,' and to solicit the attention of Heaven to my individual concerns?

You have all the warrant that it is possible for you to wish for. You have the warrant of God's own blessed word. Nature, indeed, and reason, although they are miserably deficient guides in religion, might of themselves prompt you to believe that the Author of your being is, in some sort, accessible to the expression of your wants; and that, whatever power caused you to exist as a rational creature, you must still depend upon that power, who may well be supposed to be interested for your preservation and your welfare. And because this power is something awfully great, and men have

both a feeling of being accountable above, and a consciousness of offending, they have, therefore, where they have been destitute of Revelation, peopled heaven, in the corrupt imagination of their hearts, with baser objects of worship, and ransacked earth for devices to propitiate the wrath of the powers above. But all these wants of nature are provided for in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Who is both the Propitiation for our sins, and the High Priest through Whose hands our offerings of prayer are rendered acceptable to God. He "is the Mediator of the New Testament." In Him "we have boldness and access" by faith. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." "No man cometh to the Father but by" Him.

But the objector of the other class may draw a different conclusion from the same survey of the aspect of things, and may argue, not that our prayers cannot reach the Throne of glory, but that they must be superfluous. Why should I pray to God?—to God Who made me, and Who supplies all my wants and those of all creation? Do we not say in the very forms of prayer provided by the Church, that He is "more ready to hear than we to pray," and that He knows both "our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking?" Does God need the information of our wants which our feeble breath is to convey? or is it to be recommended to us to persuade Him by dint of argument, to move Him by the charm and force of human eloquence? Most unquestionably not. But it is so appointed by God, and we are so constituted in nature, that many blessings and acts of grace are made contingent upon

our prayers. I do not notice any refinements which may be found, perhaps, in some modern publications, as if prayer were only an evidence of what God is working in us, and the prelude and indication of what has been ordained to follow. Leaving all such books and their perplexities, and going straight to the Bible, you will there find that prayer is a very simple thing. You will see it very plainly and very constantly taught, that what you pray for in faith you will obtain, and what you fail to pray for you will lose; and that judgments, which otherwise would most certainly overtake you, will be withdrawn in consequence of prayer. And the habitual exercise of prayer affords the means of preserving us in a sense of dependence upon God, of purifying our affections and drawing our thoughts to the world above. It is what serves to keep in freshness and life our communion with that heaven, through Jesus, the Son of God, for which the earth is our stage of preparation. If we live without prayer, we live without God. And if we live without God in this world, O where, I beseech you, can be our hope for the next? Prayer, therefore, may be made a test to us of our own spiritual safety. If we do sincerely pray to God (for I do not speak of a mere mechanical performance of prayer, as a child repeats by rote a task learnt at school), but if we do sincerely pour out our hearts in prayer before God, we are at least advancing towards a religious life. If, on the other hand, we are too dead to the powers of the world to come, too busy with other thoughts, too deeply implicated in pursuits and plea-

sures, our devotion to which we feel to be inconsistent with the devotion of which God is the object—if we are too much under the power of the shame of this world to prostrate ourselves as needy sinners before Him—if the habit of our minds be averse from all spiritual exercises,—then what can we pronounce upon ourselves but that, continuing in such a state, we are strangers altogether to God and hope? Yes—on we go, carelessly and unconcernedly, perhaps, with our sails all set to catch the breeze which wafts us smoothly along, unconscious of error, unsuspicious of harm; but we are only hurrying to make shipwreck of our souls, and to strike upon our inevitable perdition.

These are the reasons of prayer. And for the same reasons which make it necessary that we should pray *at all*, it is necessary that we should pray *frequently* and *regularly*. Repetition and assiduity must be employed to resist the ceaseless action of opposite causes, and to preserve our souls from the rust of the world. The parable was spoken "to this end, that men ought *always* to pray," and it is said in the same way of the exemplary soldier, Cornelius, that he "gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God *alway*." To "pray *without ceasing*" is also an Apostolic injunction. The meaning of these expressions is evidently not that our whole lives should be one uninterrupted act of prayer, but that we should keep up the *constant practice* of prayer, that we should *habitually* lift our hands and hearts to God. We stand in continual need of His mercy, of His pardon, of His guidance; we exist only by His bounty, and of all in

which our hands are engaged, the issue depends upon His providence. And the *causes* of devotion occurring so frequently, some correspondence should be seen in the *effects*.

Such frequency is indeed essential to the production, the nourishment, the growth and improvement of all religion in the soul. Think only of all that is wanted in this way. To keep alive that clear fire of inward piety which, if it once die, it is hard to rekindle; to save us from sinking back, in the inner man, into a dangerous ignorance of our own condition; to maintain the struggling principles of obedience and love against the solicitations of our lusts within, and the assaults of the world without; to protect the tenderness of conscience and the salutary dread of contact with sin; to fortify our patience and invigorate our hope in all the trials, the provocations, the sad perplexities of life; to preserve a spiritual state of the affections, a living remembrance of our treasure laid up in heaven, a temper, in our walk upon earth, of Christian humility, gentleness, and love. What recourse have we for all this, but to the promised grace of God, and what possible expectation of that precious help if we neglect our prayers? Even as among men—(I borrow the illustration from an old divine from whom I now borrow some other ideas besides, and who has left to posterity the richest stores of thought and language)—even as among men, the habit of meeting and conversing produces a freedom of acquaintance, but forbearance of intercourse dissolves or slackens the bonds of amity, and generates

an increasing coldness between the parties; so it is with regard to God Himself. By seeking Him often, we acquire a lively perception of His goodness, a solid and sincere pleasure in approaching Him: but by long intermission we become regardless of His favour and insensible of His love; we think of Him but little, remember Him but faintly, and shun that faint remembrance. An estrangement of our affections, a distaste, an aversion for divine things, creeps gradually over the heart, and warps also the understanding: abstaining from the presence of God, we form attachments prejudicial to that friendship which He deigns to hold with us; we contract a familiarity with His enemies, with all those passions, propensities, habits, and influences which are described in Scripture under the general terms of the *World* and the *Flesh;* passions, propensities, habits, and influences which, having once drawn us into an unrestrained acquaintance, soon reduce us to be their slaves.

Devotion, in short, must die without exercise. There is, *by nature*, a *difficulty* in abstracting our thoughts and affections from sensible things, and fastening them upon objects purely spiritual; summoning to this one point our rambling thoughts, and composing the irregular frame of our hearts. Without practice this difficulty of nature cannot be overcome; with practice it gives way more and more; for, although the spirit of prayer is the gift of God, it must, like other graces, be improved: "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; and from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." The

more we draw near to God, the more we feel that He draws near to us; we acquire in time a devotional habit of mind, a propensity to our religious duties, and a satisfaction in the performance of them. Having access through Christ, our great High Priest and Intercessor, we come, as St. Paul directs us, "boldly to the Throne of grace." We do not, indeed, lose our feelings of humility, our solemn impressions of reverence and awe; but when we find that "as His majesty is, so is His mercy;" when we "taste and see that the Lord is good," that He "is nigh unto all such as call upon Him faithfully;" when our experience has taught us these refreshing truths, we drop our reluctance and our languor; we cast aside our discouraging apprehensions, and disengage ourselves from the embarrassments of doubt: we feel the force of the words used by the Psalmist, and adopt the resolution which they convey, "Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live;" we feel that He is our reliance, our resource, our confidence, our hope, our light and life, our all in all; we cast our care upon Him as upon a Father who will never, never leave us nor forsake us.

But are we then to desist, if such feelings do not accompany, if such effects do not follow from, our prayers? What if we must plainly acknowledge that, although we believe the Gospel to be true, respect the institutions of religion, and endeavour not absolutely to scandalize it in our lives, we cannot pretend to be in a state to which the terms of *piety*, or *holiness*, or

heavenly-mindedness can, with any sort of propriety, be applicable: we may be ready to grant that all this is very insufficient, but so it is—we cannot help it—and are we then to live without prayer till something shall happen to make us excessively religious, and to abstain from offering up our devotions *at all*, till we can offer them in a really devout spirit? Alas! (we may say to those who argue thus), have you any *wish* to become more religious?—are you not secretly rather afraid than desirous of becoming so? Pray, then: for God forbid that we should cut away even the feeblest thread that holds you to your faith and duty: pray—for you have need enough; but add it to your prayers that God would give you a better mind, and a sense of the awful nature of things pertaining to your salvation—the salvation of those immortal but sinful souls for which the Son of God, Who had glory with His Father before the world was, died the bloody and shameful death of the cross.

But what if, with every disposition and desire to improve in religion—what if, with the clearest conviction and the fullest sense of our wants before God, we still find that our hearts are cold in the performance of the task—that, at least, we have no fervency of spirit, no ardour in supplication; that, whether in our private or public devotions, our thoughts rove, in spite of us, occasionally abroad, and rest upon other objects while our lips repeat their mechanical exercise? Or what if, having prayed long and earnestly for such as we feel to be fitting objects of prayer—for ability to keep our

good resolutions ; for the correction of some evil habit, or the extinction of some irregular desire ; for the removal of involuntary evil thoughts, or of religious perplexities and doubts ; for the spirit of prayer itself ; for an improved manner of participation in all the acts of divine worship ; for changes in our own circumstances, or in the state of affairs around us, which would seem manifestly calculated to promote our usefulness or the interests of religion :—what if, having prayed long for any or all of these, we still have prayed in vain, till we begin to think ourselves excluded from the benefit of those encouraging promises, " Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you "—" If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." We seem to suffer from the principle laid down by St. James, " Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss ; " yet in *what point* we ask *amiss*, we are incapable of ascertaining.

To all these different complaints we must reply, Persevere, persevere, persevere ! The wanderings and distractions to which we may be subject, although we ought still to struggle against them, will never, perhaps, be totally subdued ; some degree of this imperfection is, probably, inseparable from nature, and how often do we see it feelingly lamented in the posthumous private devotions of men who have truly deserved the name of *saints !* We have to do with an indulgent Master, Who, if the heart be truly humble and the spirit truly willing, will not visit it upon us severely that the flesh is weak.

It is also useful for us that our presumption should be chastised by feeling that, while we are encumbered with this house of clay, we cannot be exempt from the mixture of infirmity; and that, although, in the resurrection, we shall be as the angels of God in heaven, we never can be so while on earth. I confess, in fact, that I would rather hear a believer lament his deficiencies in prayer, than boast of his enjoyments, and should regard it as a better evidence of his spiritual state. And when we speak of defect of ardency in prayer, it is necessary that we should understand what we mean. Our necessities are great, and our sense of them ought to be deep; our love ought also to be lively. And to all this our devotion should correspond; yet, possibly, we are coveting (if I may so express it) a style of praying which has more to do than we suspect with a fervid temperament, or even with a meretricious excitement of the imagination. Prayer, although it should be earnest and reverent, prompted by a sense of our wants before God, springing from fixed principles of faith and love, and flowing immediately forth from the depths of the heart, yet may be acceptably offered in the form of a calm, solemn, and composed address. And among the varieties afforded in the examples of prayer recorded in Scripture, we see little which exhibits the character of an agitated and tumultuous vehemence. Let me not, however, be misunderstood: for God in His mercy keep us from being content with formality and coldness! Let me not be supposed to exclude the strivings of the soul when it longs to lift itself on high, and feels that its

wings are clogged with the base particles of earth; the sorrow, even the agony, of the heart under the consciousness of multiplied failures and transgressions; nor, on the other hand, the light and comfort which breaks in upon it in happier intervals, when its yearnings are graciously met.

But, again, with respect to prayers long offered in vain, the first step to be recommended is to satisfy ourselves whether we have proved our sincerity, and, at the same time that we have sought the grace of God above, have, in dependence upon Him, maintained the conflict faithfully, and done all that human weakness could do to master the object ourselves. And if we have, and still have failed, we may confide in Almighty God that, in His own good time, He will remove our trial or temptation, if to remove it be really for our advantage (with which condition, and the committal of our cause into the hands of His wisdom, we ought to qualify our prayers). But, possibly, our struggle with that temptation is precisely the proof of our faith and constancy which it is the will of God to exact; or the continuance of the evil which we deprecate is itself the very exercise of our perseverance in prayer by which it pleases Him to put us to the test. The text instructs us not only "that men ought *always* to pray," but that they ought "*not to faint.*" Prayer, therefore, itself, is still the cure; and it is always to be remembered that we are not to look, in general, either for a *sensible effect* in *immediate* answer to our prayers, or an infallible guidance when we seek to be led in the way of truth.

For this would be little short of asking a sign from heaven, and would totally subvert the appointed system of our Christian warfare and probation. How could there be any trial of faith and patience if men were sure always to gain the object of their prayers by as direct and perceptible a consequence as they procure the article for which they make payments to their brethren among mankind; or where would there be any field for the exercise of spiritual discernment, for steadfastness and soundness of belief, for resistance to every passing *wind of doctrine*, if God dealt out information to those who ask it by as regular a return as our correspondents in the transactions of the world? The wants which the sincere Christian has represented to his Father will always be supplied at such time and in such measure as the Father knows to be for his happiness and health. The very turn of affairs which had disappointed his hopes, and caused him to think the object lost, will, perhaps, issue in some point which his eye could not command, and develop to him, in its subsequent course, the conduct of a power which sat above him, and saw more than mortal ken. The reward of his perseverance, though seemingly long delayed, will come at last; "though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." "O tarry thou the Lord's leisure: be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart." "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness." *His* measure of the lapse of time is not adjusted to the scale of impatient and short-sighted creatures:—"Hear," says our Saviour

in the parable introduced by the words of our text, "hear what the *unjust judge* saith. And shall not *God* avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, *though He bear long with them?*"—God, who is not only a *just Judge* but a merciful Father,—"I tell you that He will avenge them *speedily.*" I shall not here stop to take any controversial view of what is conveyed in the words "His own elect," but shall merely notice, with reference to this point, the important charge addressed to us all by the Apostle, "Give all *diligence* to *make* your calling and *election sure.*" Our chief and our only present concern is with that part of the passage which encourages perseverance in prayer. The example proposed to our imitation is that of an *importunity* not *to be rebuffed;* and there are other passages of Scripture, in which terms equally strong and decided are employed to dissipate the scruples and to stimulate the backwardness of nature. In the parable subjoined, in St. Luke's Gospel, to the Lord's prayer, one friend is represented as at first resolutely refusing to be disturbed for a matter of neighbourly accommodation, but yielding in the end to the pertinacity of the other; and the word in the original Greek which we there render *importunity* is of such force as hardly to bear a literal translation, signifying properly his *effrontery,* his *want of shame.* We are instructed also by scriptural precept and example to "continue instant,"—to strive "fervently in prayers," and to watch "thereunto with all perseverance."

But after all that we can say upon the subject of

Prayer—the reasons for performing it, the necessity of being frequent and persevering in the performance—we shall soon lose the spirit of supplication, and certainly violate the precept that "men ought *always* to pray," unless we establish and carefully observe *certain rules* for its *stated* performance. In determining these rules, and allotting to their devotions the just place in the distribution of their time, men are at liberty to consult their own consciences and exercise their own discretion; yet there are particular times for this duty, at which it would seem indispensable to perform them—times which Nature herself appears to indicate, in correspondence with her unchanging revolutions, which common convenience would also suggest, and which, though never appointed by any specific institution, are sanctioned by the practice of men eminently religious of old, and the consenting example of their successors—those times which are recommended by the royal prophet, "It is a good thing, O Most High, to shew forth Thy loving-kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night." This rule applies also to the duty which we can never omit to urge, though but incidentally, when we are upon the subject of Prayer—the duty of *family worship*. With the return of day we may be said to receive from our God a renewal of life; we commence or resume our several occupations; we buckle on our armour and go forth, after the intervention of secure repose, again to encounter the battle of the world, its troubles, its business, its temptations: it is then, therefore, *peculiarly* imperative upon us to thank the

Author and Preserver of our lives (for thanks should be always coupled with prayer, and mercies received should be acknowledged when fresh mercies are implored), to crave His direction and His support, and, by offering the first-fruits of our daily occupations, to consecrate and consign them all to His blessing.

Again, is it not reasonable that before we sink into the arms of sleep, the image of Death, we should close and wind up our cares in the same manner; that we should wipe off, as it were, the sins and follies of the day, and deposit ourselves and all that is dear to us—our souls and all our earthly concerns—in the custody of that Shepherd of Israel Who never slumbereth nor sleepeth, beseeching Him that when we lie down to our last repose we may be destined to rise again to a joyful resurrection?

But where religion is planted in the soil of a faithful heart it is not only with the rising and setting sun that it will exhale to heaven the fragrancy of prayer. There are numberless occasions in which it will prompt the secret aspiration; and in the midst of the crowd and bustle of the world the silent orisons of piety will escape and find their way to the throne of God. There are also conjunctures in human life which cannot wait for the recurrence of stated hours, and in which prayer (as before hinted) is our only solace and resource. In the assaults of temptation—in the difficulties of duty—in the doubts which confuse and darken our path—in the sufferings of the body, the sore anxieties of the mind—in the struggles of danger, the severities of dis-

tress—in the feeling of desolation, and the desertion of all earthly comfort which proceed from the flood of unlooked-for calamity, the crash of cherished hope, the hollowness of trusted friendship, or the bitter injustice of the world—in all these cases the arms of God are open to us, and to them we should fly for shelter and relief.

Such is the nature and such are the benefits of the duty of prayer. And will men, will believers in the truth of the Gospel, suffer themselves to lose the habit of devotion—excuse themselves from discharging this duty? What! are they too closely engaged in a multiplicity of employments to bestow a thought upon God and their own salvation? Are they careful and troubled about so many things that the one thing needful can find no place in their arrangements? Shall worldly business, or worldly pursuits of any kind, be pleaded as the sufficient and satisfactory reason for leaving their souls to go to destruction? And will they even undertake the charge of worldly business, the responsibility of the duties assigned to them, without seeking the blessing and guidance of Him upon Whom all ultimately depends? Alas! how many instances of error and perverseness, how many violations of integrity, prudence, and moderation in the discharge of worldly business, might have been saved if the persons who have committed them had been governed by principles of piety, and had reposed their affairs in the keeping of God!

But some men may possibly plead inability or igno-

rance—want of instruction, want of all practice in spiritual employments. Have you not the ability to tell your wants? The most uneducated persons are not deficient in appealing, for the relief of temporal wants and sufferings, to the compassion of their fellow-men: where then is the difficulty of representing your spiritual indigence to God, Who is "no respecter of persons," and Who understandeth even our thoughts afar off? Are you looking for some extraordinary gift of prayer, and imagining that the address which we are charged to make, in the privacy of our closets, to our Father which seeth in secret, can only consist in a certain volubility of phrases, delivered in a peculiar intonation, of which it is possible that you may have witnessed some examples? The *gift* of prayer, as has been well observed, is a widely different thing from the *spirit* of prayer. Gifts, which may edify the Church or distinguish its members, may be made matter of exhibition and vain-glory, as were miraculous gifts themselves in Apostolic days; but the feeling within, however expressed, the breathings of the contrite heart, are what the Lord of Sabaoth regards. And if you pray ill, can you not pray that God would teach you to pray better? Can you not, as you now are, say so much as, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" a prayer which we know may prove effectual? Can you not borrow some petitions which will suit you from the fifty-first Psalm? Or can you derive no assistance from some of those short and simple forms adapted to a variety of cases which are found in the Prayer-book, and in many plain

manuals of devotion? O learn to feel your wants before God, and you will make or find some vent for them in words! At least, you can say the Lord's Prayer. Let us take you, then, if necessary, upon that ground alone; endeavour to say that prayer with the spirit and with the understanding also. How large is its import, how suggestive are all its petitions, is what the time will not permit us to consider now; but remember it is your *Father* Whom you there address. Arise, and go to your Father. Do not hesitate to say to Him, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." Once turn to Him in a repentant spirit; He sees your approach; He is moved with compassion; He runs to meet you; He clasps you to the bosom of forgiveness and love. And there shall be a festival made in the house for the joy of your return. "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was DEAD, and is ALIVE AGAIN, and was LOST, and is FOUND."

O if what has been here delivered this day can only prevail upon one unthinking sinner to bow his knees and his heart before God, and seek, through Christ Who died for him, the mercy which he needs, then one soul may have been led into the way of salvation, and there will be "JOY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGELS OF GOD!"

This sermon was first preached forty years ago, and is published by particular desire of some who have heard it since, though the thoughts are occasionally taken from Barrow.

SERMON XIV.

THE JOURNEYINGS OF ISRAEL A TYPE OF THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE.

DEUT. VIII. 2, 3.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

IT would not be easy, within the limits prescribed to us in this place, to do full justice to all the topics presented to our contemplation in the passage which has been here selected. We may, however, with the Divine grace and blessing, engage profitably in such considerations as we can afford to bestow upon its leading points; and they may be taken, without aiming at any very formal distribution of a connected subject, in the order in which they stand.

Moses, in that recapitulation of the law from which the book of *Deuteronomy* takes its name, reminds the Israelites of all which the hand of God had done among them, and points out the object of all the wonders of mercy, as well as of the signal chastise-

ments which they had experienced. They had been rescued, by marvellous exhibitions of power, from their oppressors; they had enjoyed exalted privileges; they had been directed by visible guidance from above; they had been blessed openly by omnipotent succour; they had been relieved, in their need, by miraculous supplies; they had passed through many perils and alarms; they had suffered many privations; they had been visited by dreadful and sweeping inflictions of Divine vengeance. It was a mixed history, and marked by perpetual alternations of sunshine and storm—radiance of heavenly mercy and thunders of eternal wrath. And now he calls upon them to remember all the way which they had traversed, under the Divine protection, in the wilderness—"that great and terrible wilderness," as he elsewhere describes it,—and charges it upon them to lay to heart the lessons designed to be conveyed in all the varieties of good and ill which had befallen them. The purpose of God was to *humble* them and to *prove* them, and, as it is added farther on in the same chapter, to do them good at their latter end; and He would make them know that their *lives* were in His hand, so that, in a moment, He could cut them down in all the fulness of their pride; or, in their lack of all ordinary and natural means of sustenance, He could *speak the word,* and other resources were at His command.

And we, my brethren, are not we called upon to review the way which we may have thus far measured in life, and to reflect, each of us, as well upon the

vicissitudes which may have chequered our individual history, as upon the *great things* which *God has done* for us all? God has interposed for effecting our spiritual deliverance in a manner corresponding in every particular (if it were now to our immediate purpose to pursue the parallel) with the typical deliverance of the children of Israel. We find, according to the wonderful analogy which runs through the Divine dispensations as one mighty whole, our own case pictured to us in every point. And here we are in this wilderness of life, professing to look for our promised land beyond. But oh! how much schooling is required to set us and to keep us in the way of preparation for that great hereafter! Pilgrims and strangers upon earth, as all our fathers were, soon, very soon to disappear for ever; and knowing, all the while, that we then pass into an eternity for which we are here in a state of probation; how do we, nevertheless, suffer our hearts and affections to grapple themselves to the world, as if we knew of no other destiny awaiting us! With ample experience of our own weakness, with evidence, on all sides, of the blindness and corruption of nature if left to herself, with abundant warning and direction from above, with the gracious tender proposed to us of all the succour and all the provision for the wants of our case which Divine mercy and wisdom could conspire to supply, with Christ, and His Word, and His Spirit attending us by night and by day to guide our steps,—how constantly are we seen to refuse and to rebel! How prone do we show ourselves to indulge the wayward wishes

of our own hearts, to substitute the maxims of men for the law of God, to wander away from "the Shepherd and Bishop of" our souls, to plunge into courses which cannot consist with the idea of holiness, which cannot be reconciled with any deliberate thought of safety to the soul, which cannot, by possibility, end in peace! We are, as Christians by profession, the Israel of God—a people "holy to the Lord:" that, unless we repudiate our religion, unless we renounce our baptism, we must admit to be our express vocation. A people holy to the Lord—my brethren, let us deal honestly with ourselves, whatever may or may not be our exemption from the grosser taints of vice, or the more conspicuous characteristics of irreligion, is this, as a title applied to ourselves, a people "holy to the Lord," a sound congenial to our ears, a statement responsive to our own sentiments, a description accordant with the habitual train and routine of our proceedings and favourite pursuits? O happy for many among us if some seasonable check, some appropriate chastisement, some salutary alarm, shall bring us to a new sense of what we are and what we ought to be before our God, shall serve *to humble and to prove* us, that we may ourselves better *know what is in our heart*, whether, in truth, we are *keeping the commandments of God or no*, and where we are to look for help and hope, if we find that we have been going wrong. Happy if we can be made to *remember all the way which the Lord hath led us* thus far, to muse upon the instructive points of our own career, to mourn over our many wasted oppor-

tunities, our misused advantages, our unheeded responsibilities to Him above, our broken resolutions, perhaps, and our inexcusable relapses, after warnings received before, which made, for the moment, some solemn impression. And if we have a hope that our hearts have been turned to serve the Lord, and that, by His grace, we have been made something better than mere cumberers of the ground, yet in how many points are we liable to be self-deceived—so deceived, perhaps, that our hope itself is ill-founded. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" A careful and thoughtful review of our own lives, an awakened religious contemplation of the dealings of God in which we have been comprised, and the incidents of our personal history,—a serious and searching inquiry into the manner in which we have met the calls of God addressed to us, in the general or the particular dispensations of His hand affecting our case, might conduct us to some self-condemnation, which, of course, will be painful, but the seat of that pain is something which it has been very dangerous for us never to have gone deep enough to reach before. We are all subjects of mercy exercised by God: "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed:" created, preserved, redeemed by Him, we have been unthankful recipients of His goodness, and have forfeited our title to His favour; He has tried many ways to win us back, or draw us closer to Himself: all the blessings, the comforts, of this life, all the benefits and privileges of our holy faith, constitute one stream of

mercy poured from one high and hallowed source, which ought to soften and fertilize the soil of the heart, and make it bring forth, in rich abundance, the returns of obedience, gratitude, and love. And if men cannot be worked upon thus—if they rather, like Jeshurun when he "waxed fat and kicked," grow lax and worldly, because they are at ease; if they become alienated from the life of God in the soul, in proportion to their worldly prosperity and advancement, and not unfrequently so use their religious advantages as to make them the instruments of a hollow profession and a self-satisfied but empty formality—then the Lord, but still with a purpose of love, has recourse to treatment of a different kind. Then comes the severe discipline of God; alas! too often as ill understood as the profusion of His mercies. Pain, sickness, sorrow, calamity, disappointment of earthly hope, injustice received at the hand of the world, wearing vexations of heart, humiliating reverses, overwhelming distresses, or appalling dangers,—all these we call the *trials* of life, and it is to *try* and purify us that they are sent—*to humble, to prove us, to know what is in our heart.* In the seasons of severe visitation, men who have lived in utter and reckless ignorance of their own spiritual condition, or men of some Christian attainment who have forgotten themselves and fallen back, and have become ensnared in some unguarded point of weakness, may feel a change come over them, and be prompted to ask what they have been doing before God, and what it portends to their souls. They are impelled to look into long-

unexplored recesses of the inner man, and unexamined accumulations of trangression are brought to light: the shock of adversity, the loud and perhaps sudden disturbance of their thoughtless enjoyment, has waked up the drowsy conscience, and they judge of themselves as they failed to judge before. And then they look back upon former mercies and warnings alike unimproved, and they stand condemned and alarmed. They feel that they want mercy for the past and grace to serve their God for the future; and if they follow up the blessed opportunity, they find both one and the other in Christ, the friend of penitent sinners.

It is by a process very different from that which we lay down in imagination for ourselves, that, when religiously disposed and possessed by some good perception of the beauty of holiness, we are advanced and confirmed in a religious state of mind. We are apt to look only at the brightness of our portion. We forget our wretched imperfections which remain, one after another, to be cured: we think not of the trials and humiliations by which that cure must be effected.

But let us proceed with the remaining portion of our text. "And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that thou mightest know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

The wants of the body, and the wants of the soul, are both brought under our contemplation in these

words. As the words (*i.e.* the words which close the passage) are applied by Christ to His own case, in the scene of the temptation, we see that they are meant to declare the mandate of God, or simple exercise of His sovereign will, to suffice, when He may see proper, for the sustenance of life in His creatures, by extraordinary as well as by ordinary means, or by no visible and sensible means whatever—by manna showered down upon the Israelites in the wilderness, by the naked energy of Divine power in the forty days' fast of Moses, Elijah, and the Son of God, Whom the lawgiver and the prophet had typically represented. We stand before God, in every point of view, full of wants—always needy, and absolutely and entirely dependent upon His goodness—our wants for the very means of continuing our present existence are perpetually recurring day by day, and perpetually supplied by Him Who openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness. We pray for our daily bread; but we fail, for the most part, to acknowledge in our hearts, with devout thankfulness, blessings which are so common and familiar as the rich and varied provision made by Infinite Wisdom for our corporeal necessities. Yet these ordinary results of many combining operations in nature, as turned to account by the hand of man, himself the workmanship of God, do not constitute a less exercise of power, nor a lower subject of praise and wonder, than the departure from the established train of causes and effects, which it has been His pleasure upon marked occasions to exhibit. And we should always remember that it is the

efficacy of His *Word,* in the sense which we have here in view, by which all things are held together and made to proceed in their appointed course. As, in the first instance, "He spake the *word* and they were made, He commanded and they were created," so the same Psalmist, in one of his descriptions of the scenes of nature, the objects of creation, the changes of the seasons and the processes of vegetation, applies to all these the words, "He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth; His *word* runneth very swiftly."

It is by the *Word of God,* then, by the fiat of the Divine will, that the animal life of man is sustained, whether in the case of any miraculous intervention or in the appointed and regular action of the different qualities and properties of created objects in their mutual adaptation—the body being the recipient of food. Things are constituted as we see them, in their effects, dependencies, and relations by God Himself: they are not so by any original necessity, but so by His will, and subject always to His dispensing power. But there are other and higher wants of which man is apt to be far less sensible, and for the supply of which he is equally dependent upon the good pleasure of God. Man has a soul, as well as a body; and it is as necessary to the preservation of his spiritual life, that he should be nourished by the heavenly manna, the living bread which came down from heaven, as it is necessary for the sustenance of his body, that he should partake of ordinary food. We must receive Christ by faith into our souls: we must live upon Him in our spiritual

man. The alternative is spiritual *death.* Yet how widely does the Laodicean sentiment prevail, "I have need of nothing;" and how often is the question practically asked, by those who survey, with a satisfied feeling, their own religious attainments and performances, "What lack I yet!" Ah! happier, far happier than this condition, to have wandered ever so far from our Father's home, and to have sunk ever so low in wretchedness and destitution, if only in that perishing condition the prodigal is brought to himself, and prompted to return with a sorrowful confession of his shame. It is then that he will be received with open arms, and clasped to the bosom of paternal love. The Word of God, in most familiar iteration, speaks blessing and encouragement to those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness," and assures us that He filleth "the hungry with good things," while "the rich He "sendeth" empty away." And high is the privilege of those, however lowly may be their condition upon earth, to whom the precious promise belongs, —"to him that overcometh will I give of the hidden manna"—the secret influences of heavenly grace, the comfort and refreshment of spirit unknown to the children of this world, reserved in the person of Christ, as the relic of manna was deposited for a memorial in the emblematical ark of the first covenant.

Christ, in accommodation to the wants of our nature, dispenses Himself as the bread of life (in one special way) through standing means, and appoints a ministry of distribution in His Church. Such is the ordinance of God; and in this more general sense, as well as more

literally in the particular instance of the *Word of Life*,—a devout and diligent use of the Holy Scriptures being one grand means of spiritual nutriment,—we may apply the expression that "man liveth by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

We are unquestionably to regard, as comprehended in our recourse to the heavenly manna, a faithful observance of those institutions which are of express divine appointment, and a dutiful compliance also with those which are framed by the Church in the discretionary execution of her divine commission, and in consonance with the Word of God. The sacraments of Christ, rightly used (both of which, if they were nothing more, are badges of our religion, enjoined upon us by its Founder); prayer, public and private, rightly offered; and participation, with the spirit and with the understanding, in the several acts of our public worship; all these are among the things which minister to the life of the soul, and without which it cannot possibly thrive or prosper. We need not be at all afraid,—unless in a superstitious use of them which attaches the notion of merit to the performance, and makes the mere *quantity* of performance of just so much value counted up,—we need not be at all afraid of the frequency of any such acts. It is not by frequency that they pall upon us; they are most relished, and found to be most reviving, precisely by those who use them with constancy. O that we could imbibe the spirit of the holy Psalmist, who says, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth!" O that we

could be like the holy Apostles and their company, who continued "daily with one accord in the Temple," "and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God!" O that we could make some faint approximation in the Church on earth to the unfailing devotions of the Church in heaven, where the mystical living creatures, who were seen in vision surrounding the throne of God, "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come!"

SERMON XV.

CONFIRMATION AND THE SACRAMENTS.

St. Luke I. 6.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

My brethren, it is for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ alone, by faith, and not for his own works or deservings, that man, as is most scripturally stated in the eleventh of our own Articles of Religion, can be "accounted righteous before God;" and fatal will be the issue if he goes about to establish his own righteousness, and refuses to submit himself to the righteousness of God. It is a constituent part, however, of this very submission, and a perfectly indispensable feature of his faith, that he should walk "in all the commandments and ordinances blameless:" he must not lie open to the charge of living in the omission of any known duty, either ceremonial or moral, if he would put in his plea to acceptance and justification in the sight of God. He must not, either upon the ground of a worldly wisdom (or rather folly), which cannot see the use of these things, or a spiritual arrogance, which soothes itself in the idea of superior illumination in treating them as non-essentials, take any dispensation, assume any exemption, from the obligation of conformity to the example

of our Lord Jesus Christ in insisting upon receiving baptism at the hands of John. He must not be found acting in opposition to the general principle, the standing maxim in religion which that blessed One then laid down for His followers: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

The commendatory notice, therefore, of Zacharias and Elizabeth, in the text, carries a lesson, plainly and unquestionably, to the disciples of the Gospel; and if we are released from the yoke of Levitical institutes, we are not therefore suffered to treat with neglect, or to hold as matters of little importance, the fewer and more simple ordinances enjoined by the Christian religion, or the observances, not being repugnant to Scripture, which, in virtue of her divine commission, are framed by the authority of the Church. If there are men to be found among our people, who *rest* in outward forms and religious technicalities, neglecting the cultivation of spiritual religion and failing in the weightier matters of the Law, —an error against which I believe there has never been any deficiency of warnings here,—there are others who, reprobating this error, conceive that they hit the true mark in depreciating, if not despising, the exterior ordinances of religion, the appointments of worship, the transmitted usages of the Church: whereas, according to the authority of Christ, the primary and fundamental obligations of practical duty, and the exhibition of Christian graces in the character, are things which *ought to be done* —nothing can be substituted for these, nothing can be accepted which does them prejudice,—but even the

minutiæ of religious observance and ecclesiastical regulation, are *things which ought not to be left undone.* And this principle of conformity,—agreeably to the tenor of our own 26th Article of Religion, "Of the unworthiness of the ministers, which hinders not the effect of the sacrament,"—is not invalidated by any unhappy inconsistency to be witnessed in our religious guides. For Christ says again, "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not."

I might apply these principles at large and in some detail to the duty which lies upon the professed members of the Church, in relation to the received ordinances of their religion. I might so treat the subject as to embrace the opportunities of public prayer and praise, —the *manner* of participation in the forms of worship (take the obvious example of *kneeling* in prayer)—and the observance, generally, of regulations prescribed by authority; carrying into our religion what certainly is not less obligatory upon us in our religious than our civil performance (the thing enjoined being not contrary to the will of God), the rule prescribed for us, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." All, however, which I now propose to do, is to consider with you, my brethren, in a simple and familiar manner, some leading points of three great ritual institutions of our Religion in the connexion more particularly which they have one with another—namely, the *two sacraments* and the ordinance of *confirmation.*

What is the use of baptism? There are very few persons, except absolute scoffers, who would be disposed to answer that it is of no use whatever. But there are, I am afraid I must say, a good many persons, themselves baptized, and not repudiating their baptism, and procuring their children to be baptized like themselves, who seem as if they would be much at a loss to describe what definite meaning they connect with the administration of the ordinance, and to explain what value they attach to it, what benefit they expect from it. They find and they take it as a custom handed down in the Church, and they have a general indistinct kind of notion that it is by baptism that people are *made Christians:* moreover it is usually considered, among the high and the low, as an occasion of some festive celebration; and besides, the child who constitutes a new addition to the family receives its name, and the registration is duly made, which may be necessary to secure evidence hereafter affecting some legal rights.*

My brethren, I do fear that this, or something like this, is the amount of the conceptions formed and entertained in not a few minds, among professed Christian men, in relation to the sacrament of baptism. But there are also persons really religious, and very capable of sustaining religious conversation, and very zealous in communicating their own peculiar views upon religious points, who, if pressed with the same question, "what is the use of baptism?" would, as a consequence of some

* There is no general registration of births in Canada by civil authority.

of their own explanations in religious matters, and in harmony with some of their particular predilections, be rather embarrassed in seeking to give any other than a very lame and unsatisfactory sort of reply. For, if baptism were nothing more than they would make it,—if to attach any special importance to this sacrament, or to attribute to it any extraordinary effects, be a mere superstitious reliance upon the charm operated in the ceremonial work,—if men, without any very great harm, may dispense with it,—if the manifestation of any serious concern about it, be only a characteristic of that ignorance which, in some quarters, is held to be the mother of devotion,—if to contend for, to lay any stress upon it, be an evidence of spiritual deficiency and darkness,—then it would be a little difficult to say what *is* the use of baptism, or to conceive why such a rite was instituted by Him Who is the "author and finisher of our faith." It would be a little difficult to say why there should be such a standing and distinguishing ordinance of the Christian religion at all, holding the place in that system which was held under the old covenant by circumcision, or for what object it was solemnly and for all perpetuity appointed, if men may use their own discretion in complying with it, and are rather more wrong in highly appreciating than in disparaging it; and if all the change to be looked for, in their actual condition and their prospects, from their participation in the Gospel and its privileges, is something totally independent of this act of baptism.

But, in the meantime, what says the Bible?—for that

is the way to settle the enquiry. Does the Bible, then, or does it not, represent our first adoption into the covenant and its privileges, as effected by the means of this sacrament, and the way as thence opened for the ulterior communications of divine grace? What is the answer rendered by St. Peter to those who were pricked at the heart, and asked, in their trembling anxiety, what they were to do? "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." What is the instruction given to St. Paul, in the prostration of his soul under the effect of his miraculous vision, and after the recovery of his sight, emblematically analogous to the removal of his mental darkness? "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." But, passing over many other testimonies of Scripture, let us consider the language of Christ Himself. Christ, then, in giving the commission for evangelizing the world, and the promise to be with the bearers of that commission to the end of time, has ordained baptism by water, "IN THE NAME"—can any form more awfully sacred be conceived?—"OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST." Christ, as we have seen, by His example in submitting to the inferior baptism of John, and by the maxim which, upon that occasion, He lays down for us in ever-memorable words, has warned us against any presumptuous licence to dis-

pense with, or lightly to esteem such an ordinance, as seeming to our reason either superfluous or inefficacious. Christ has declared that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned"—making no promise of mercy, no stipulation for conveying the blessings of the covenant, to unbaptized believers—appointing means which the believer is to use—denouncing the unbeliever—and *passing by* the case of the believer who does not use the means, and who trusts his salvation to the contingency of his being accepted in the rejection of them, because he believes;—not, however, that he believes unreservedly, since he withholds his belief from the efficacy of this divine ordinance. Christ has also declared that "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The comparison of this mention of *water* with the notices of baptism already cited, appears to fix the sense of the word upon the same object, and it is so taken generally by the founders of the Reformed Churches.

We do not say that no marked subsequent change can be required in the baptized subject—for experience proves too well, in thousands of instances, the necessity of such a change; nor yet do we deny that there is, in all cases, a work remaining to be carried on, a fuller development to follow, imported in the words, "and of the Spirit:" but, at least, and in the lowest view of the case, there is, according to the admission of all fair and reasonable enquirers, *a sense* in which a new birth is conveyed in baptism. This, however, is what many persons have

not faith to digest (for that is not unfrequently the real secret of the matter). They are prompted to say in their hearts, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" They do not consider that God, Who gave the infant a body and a soul, and caused its natural birth to take place, can communicate to that infant farther benefits by whatever means He sees good to appoint. They do not consider the action of the divine power upon the human subject, as displayed in the example of John the Baptist even within the womb of his mother. And sometimes they would resolve their want of faith into a spirituality which looks higher than to ordinances and beggarly elements. The doctrine of baptism, however, which is here in question, founded upon the plain meaning of words which stand in the Bible, was received from the first by the whole Church, and passed down from age to age: the Prayer-book shows you distinctly enough, and in a great number of places, that it is the doctrine of the Church of England; and whoever has the opportunity of such research, will find that it is incorporated with the systems of theology adopted by the different national branches of the Reformation, and taught by the most celebrated foreign Reformers.

It is, therefore, not a little remarkable that, in our own day, many sincerely pious minds should be led to conceive an alarm at the language of the Church upon this subject. They imagine that it militates against a correct estimate of vital religion by inspiring men with a dangerous reliance upon outward forms, and, prompting them to build upon these as sufficient for their salva-

tion, draws them off from looking directly to Christ, and lulls in a blinded security those who ought to be awakened to earnest strivings of the soul, in order to a saving process to be wrought in their spiritual man. Now, to men who are jealous for the safety of these high interests, we should desire to speak considerately and lovingly—thankful if, at the same time, we can do so convincingly, and glad, so far as their *object* is concerned, to go along with them. But we do conceive not only that their alarm is unfounded, but that nothing, in point of fact, can be more *contrary* to the effects which they anticipate, than the proper and legitimate consequences of the doctrine of the Church in relation to baptism. The Church declares in her formularies, according to her interpretation of Holy Writ, that the sacraments are vehicles of grace, and that in baptism we are made "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." Here, then, you have something to work upon with advantage indeed. These privileges should be kept constantly before the baptized subject in his Christian training, and in his attendance through life upon the ministry of the Word, as things of which it is matter of unspeakable thankfulness that he has, by the free mercy of God, been made partaker—as things which it is awful beyond description to forfeit, and from which, if he fall away, the loudest call is given to repent and return—things which should operate upon him in every step of his race, as a stimulus for giving all diligence to make his calling and election sure, and for

seeking earnestly that he may be renewed, day by day, by the power of the divine Spirit, and strengthened with might in the inner man. And so it is that St. Paul deals with the believers of the early Church; as, for example, when, in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, he says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" with all the consecutive exhortations to be there found, it will be seen, by an examination of the passage, that he founds the whole charge upon the fact of their *baptism*. As, again, in the case of the Colossians, where the words occur, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above," with all the concomitant matter which he there urges upon that body of believers. And so it is that the Church earnestly prays for the child in the administration of baptism, and so that she affectionately charges the sponsors, whom (according to the true intent of that spiritual provision) she takes as her *guarantees* that a baptized child shall be religiously brought up. And so she exacts it from himself to promise, in the open face of her people, that, by God's gracious help, he will do, assuming upon himself the vow which had been made by those sponsors in his name, when, on behalf of her divine Master, she gives him her solemn blessing at his CONFIRMATION.

The signal benefit of an ordinance such as that of confirmation, is here very strongly brought out to view. We are very far from undertaking to say that, in the real experience of life, it is always marked as a blessing;

for this we cannot say of any religious advantage enjoyed by man. Men may have and use the Bible, the ordinance of the Lord's-day, the sacraments, and the teaching of the Christian ministry, and still be far from God. Either collectively, from the laxity and degeneracy of the times in which they may happen to live, or individually, from their own perverse failure to improve their advantages, they may discharge as a mere empty formality the whole appointed round of their religious duties. All may be lifeless and without fruit. And thus the ordinance of confirmation may happen, here and there, to have been so carelessly managed as only to bring deserved reproach upon the Church; or where pains have been faithfully taken with the subjects of it, and hopes are entertained for them by ministers and friends, the promising appearances may vanish in the trial which follows—the blossom of these hopes may go up as dust. It is very disappointing, for example, to find, among the young persons who are confirmed in our communion, so many failures to follow up that solemn act of their lives by enrolling themselves among the habitual communicants of the Church. Yet what, in itself, can be more happily contrived, more beautifully adapted to set forward the youthful pilgrim in the way of life, than this ordinance of confirmation interposed as a link to connect together the two sacraments of our religion, referring him back to his privileges received and his obligations contracted in the former, and passing him up to become a participant in the latter? In all common consistency with these proceedings, he must

walk—O happy state, little appreciated, little understood by a world, a cold-hearted, thankless, undutiful, infatuated world, which calls itself Christian!—he must walk as a child of the living God.

Even if this "laying on of hands," therefore, upon baptized persons, with prayer and benediction, were *not*, as we see in Scripture that it *is*, a practice established by the Apostles in the Church, and mentioned by one Apostle in a manner to indicate it as a standing and perpetual ordinance; even if it were not a practice which was accordingly received in the early ages of the Church throughout the whole Christian world; even if it were not a practice which was retained, upon deliberate examination, as a feature of Apostolic and primitive usage, in many different branches of the Reformation besides our own; even if it were not a practice of which the loss has been most feelingly lamented by men of name in other branches of the Reformation, who candidly acknowledge an error committed by their own communion in dropping it;—all this, as many of you may be aware, my brethren, it *is*;—but even if confirmation did not, upon these grounds, challenge our respect and claim our conformity—suppose it were an invention of yesterday: yet what, *in itself*, could be more appropriate, more seasonable, more impressive, more wisely calculated, so far as means are fitted to ends, to carry on the connected plan of religious training, and to provide for a particular crisis in the stages of human life, than this? Than *this*, that the Church should step forward at once, carefully to arm

and affectionately to charge her youthful recruits, sealed in infancy as the soldiers of Christ,—trained, prepared, and examined by their immediate pastors,—and now about to mix in the warfare of the world, and (especially in the case of the male sex) to encounter the battle of new temptations in many dangerous shapes. She may be considered—when, in the ancient form of patriarchal as well as of Apostolic times, she gives them her blessing by the imposition of hands—as addressing each of them thus:—

You are the child of Adam, and, as such, were born the inheritor of sin. Sin carries an everlasting curse, of which the natural death of the body and the countless evils which exist in the world are the present visible and palpable fruits. This is your real condition; you must not shrink from the contemplation of it, as you cannot escape from the reality; but you must think of the cure. There is one way of relief from this curse, and one alone; but that way, if you know how to profit by it, is effectual and sure. It is in CHRIST, the Son of God, and the seed, at the same time, of the woman, promised, from the day of Adam's fall, to bruise the serpent's head. He has come; He has fulfilled the promise; He has suffered in your place; He has paid your debt; He has recovered for you your lost inheritance of life. He has ordained means, He has provided channels, for the extension of these benefits to mankind; He has commissioned pastors to take care of His people; He has confided the book of truth to their hands to be freely and unreservedly dispensed to all;

and has instituted ordinances as tokens and marks of His worshippers,—forms and demonstrations of their homage, means of holding them together in the bonds of brotherhood, and vehicles, by His own express stipulation, for conveying grace and refreshment to their souls. You are comprehended in these blessings; you have been reached by these merciful provisions. You sprang up by nature a worthless and a noxious weed in the wilderness of this blighted world; but you were early transplanted into the garden of God Himself, and culture has been bestowed upon you, by His appointment, upon earth; and genial influences have been shed down upon you from heaven—the tender showers of His abundant grace, and the vivifying radiance of His eternal love,—and all to fit you for your future removal, once and for ever, to the Paradise above. But you have many dangers still. Many evil influences still breathe upon you from the tainted atmosphere of this lower world; much infection of nature remains in your core. If you would serve God and save your soul, you must keep close to Him; you must love Him for His goodness to you; you must pray to Him for His grace; you must acquaint yourself with His holy Word; you must conform yourself to His holy will. Without all this, your baptism will only turn to your reproach, your blessings will only aggravate your ruin. And yet how many are the things around you and within you, which tend to draw your heart another way! how many temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil, to indispose you to devotion; to render distasteful to you

the duty of watching your own heart and temper, and the discipline of self-control; to possess you with the love of vanity and pleasure; to sway you by the force of evil example; to catch your soul with the baits of sinful indulgence! And you cannot be always nurtured and protected by friendly hands which have, thus far, guided your weakness. The time is come (it is thus that the Church is still supposed to be addressing him) when you must declare for yourself what shall be your course, and act in your own name. Hear, then, the voice of your mother, in whose bosom you have been bred, and the milk of whose doctrine you have drunk as a babe in Christ; take her blessing and her prayers, and receive her charge. Come forward and tell her whether you will abide by your baptism,—whether you will recognise your obligations to your Saviour; come forward in the assembly of His worshippers, within the walls of His sanctuary, in view of the font of your baptism, in front of the holy table at which, as the next step in the appointed course of her ordinances, you are invited to attend. Keep *that* sacred duty before your eyes; and remember that if your confirmation does not, after a reasonable interval—why not at the very first following opportunity?—bring you to the table of your Lord, you are falling back from your vows. And if you draw back, God declares—and think of the awful import of the words!—that He hath no pleasure in you. He repudiates, He rejects you; He will not accept, when you offer yourself a living sacrifice to Him, the refuse of your heart. "No man having put his

hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." "Forsake not," then, in this point, "the law of your mother:" she would lead you by the hand to the holy memorials which set before your view the immolation of the Son of God; and if you decline her invitation, made in His own authority and name, *there* will be an evidence at once of something wrong, something unsafe. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a test to you to know how things stand between you and God. Christ died for you: Christ commands, Christ charges you affectionately, as it were in His dying words, to make a formal remembrance of His death and sufferings; and promises, if you are faithfully prepared, to give you blessing in the act, to impart Himself, in spiritual communion, to your soul. The Church invites, prepares, assists, persuades you to come. But no—you see how many there are that say so—this is too serious a matter: when it comes to *this* point, we must stop. What does such a refusal mean? I do not speak here of some humble and anxious souls who have not overcome the scruples which make them distrustful of their fitness, although their self-abasement is the very qualification for their being graciously and tenderly received; but taking the world of Christians in general, what does the refusal mean? Why, it means *this*—neither more nor less than *this:* it is not that men decline the Lord's Supper; it is that they decline being religious. They think there is something about this ordinance (as if there were not something to the same effect about all the observances of religion and all acknowledgment of

its truth)—something which does not comport with a worldly and ungodly state of the heart, and *that* is a state which they cannot bring themselves to resign. Let it not be so seen with you. There cannot be a stronger proof of the value of this sacrament and the necessity of participation in it, than this very reluctance to participate; for here is a touchstone of safety; here is a candle brought which shows the existence of obstructions in the way of approach to God—obstructions, perhaps, otherwise unsuspected, but unequivocally demanding to be removed, before men can be in a right and happy state. You are a being who are to live for ever; and there can be nothing right with you, nothing happy, till you can enjoy the favour of God—till you pray and are heard in your prayer, "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, Grant us thy peace." There are difficulties in a religious course—that is not concealed from you: there is a cross to be borne, but there is a crown in reserve; and in the anticipation of that crown, permitted to those who love the appearing of their Lord, and in the exercise of those Christian graces which constitute the preparation for it, there is a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. The lawful enjoyments of this present world are tenfold enhanced, and beyond is the "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

SERMON XVI.

WORDS AND THOUGHTS ACCEPTABLE BEFORE GOD.

Ps. XIX. 14, 15, P. B. Translation.

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be alway acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

A needful prayer for man! Who is there but must be sensible (if ever he thinks about his soul at all) of his deficiency, his natural obliquity, his liability to err, and the accumulated instances of his actual transgression, in his use both of the faculty of speech and of the power of thought? Who is there that can fail to be conscious, if he at all watches himself, and sits in judgment upon his own doings, of his natural proneness to fly off from the idea of God and heavenly things in the workings of his mind, and, consequently, in the vent which they find and the expression which they give themselves in articulate words? "I set the Lord always before me,"—"I am continually with Thee,"—"Thy face, Lord, will I seek,"—these are the sayings and sentiments of the holy Psalmist, and they simply speak the proper language of every accountable being upon earth, subject to the unceasing inspection of the God Whose workmanship he is, upon Whose mercy he depends for life and hope, and to Whom he has a reckoning to render for the whole tenor

of his service in all its parts and in every shade of its duties. And yet are there not multitudes of professed Christians who, instead of exhibiting any practical remembrance of all this, may rather be described by the words of the same Psalmist, where he says that God is not in all their thoughts—nay, so far as regards any living influence within them to control their thoughts and actions, too often by the words of the same inspired author still, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"?

My brethren, that there *is* a God is what we all, without exception, recognise as an abstract truth; and men believing this truth must beware of the danger of going on, in this brief life, as if they believed nothing of the kind. God has used means enough to make us think of Him; if we learn nothing of His eternal power and Godhead from the book of this visible creation, the Apostle assures us that we are left without excuse. How much more if we remain ignorant or regardless of the truths which concern the welfare of our souls, when the book of Revelation is in our hands; when the weekly returns of the day which the Lord hath made, the reiterated calls of His ministers and all the appointed ordinances of His Church, are expressly provided to keep us from forgetting Him, and to teach us that if we would walk in safety through life, and end our walk in hope, we must walk with God. It is impossible, utterly impossible, that we can be entitled, upon any other supposition, to look for any such happy progress below, or happy result above.

God grant that the call given to us in the several observances of this very day may, by His efficacious grace and blessing, bring these solemn realities, whatever may be our actual habits of mind or conversation, more home to all our hearts!

Let us consider first, the necessity for praying and taking heed that the *words of our mouth* should be acceptable in the sight of God. So multiplied are the sins of the tongue, and so easily are we betrayed into the commission of them, that he that offendeth not in word, as we are taught by the Apostle James, "is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." But how many among us not only have to lament infirmities of this nature into which they have fallen in unguarded moments, but seem in a manner unconscious of any particular responsibility for the words which pass their lips, and virtually appropriate the sentiment of certain ungodly men of old, "Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" It will be happy if, being convicted in their consciences of their trangression in this particular instance—their abuse of the gift of *speech*—they can thence be convinced, generally, of the perilous state in which they stand. "I say unto you"—they are hardly prepared deliberately to dispute the authority of Him Who makes this declaration—'I say unto you, that every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Let all men consider this, in the first place, who are what the world calls very good and

respectable men, and not unobservant of public religious duties, but who now and then, according to a phrase familiarly used to describe the case, are known to *rap out an oath.* The same men, who say their prayers and pray that God's name may be hallowed, are known sometimes to take His name in vain by their own profane and irreverent expressions, and to manifest no extraordinary uneasiness at being assured by Himself, that they *will not be held guiltless* for doing so. "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing." No blessing will return into their own bosom, if so accompanied. But we will not now enlarge upon the varied offences of the tongue, of which the Apostle just above quoted says that, although it be a little member, "it setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell;"—we will not pursue in detail all the mischiefs of the inflammatory public harangue, the irritating private taunt—the provocation to deep and bloody revenge, or the suggestion of unholy thoughts, by means of the tongue, to other minds—the persuasion to dangerous compliances in opposition to conscience—the mischievous insinuation to serve a selfish purpose—the unscrupulous false statement—the skilful practice upon the credulity of other men—the frothy ebullitions of boastful vanity—the foolish amplifications of the grounds of personal pretension—the hurtful scandal carelessly retailed and still gathering additions from mouth to mouth—the ceaseless and ostentatious outpourings of frivolity and levity and worldliness—the self-complacent sarcasm upon persons who are conceived to be

deficient in such points as challenge consideration in certain circles of society—all of which, common enough, and passing with little censure in the intercourse of the world, are broadly offensive in the sight of God.

Forbearing to pursue these details, let us consider how far the *words of our mouth* are, according to the prayer of the Psalmist, positively *acceptable* before Him. With reference to God Himself, as the party addressed in the use of speech, the prayer which we offer, the confession which we pour out, to be *acceptable*, must be the prayer and the confession of the heart; the praise, the profession of faith, to which we give utterance, must be uttered with the spirit and with the understanding; and it is little else than a mockery of homage, bringing danger to our souls, if the heart be far from Him, to honour Him with the lips. With reference to our fellow-creatures, it is not required, nor would it be found to promote the cause of religion in the world, that those who fear God should never speak otherwise than in a strain directly religious. It is not forbidden that men should manifest a tone of cheerfulness, or indulge in an occasional playful sally of a chastened character; nor is it otherwise than desirable that they should have a facility of engaging in conversation upon all general topics. But if they are Christians indeed, as they will never in their actions, so will they never in their *words*, lose sight of the cause of their Master; they will not only guard against being provoked to speak unadvisedly with their lips—they will not only pray, in the consciousness of their own infirmity, that

God would set a watch upon their mouth and keep the door of their lips, lest they offend with their tongue, but the general influence of their conversation upon the minds of other men will be a good influence; it will work, although often insensibly, as a good leaven in the mass; and they will know, upon due occasion, how to "reprove, rebuke, exhort" their straying fellow-creatures; to comfort the broken-hearted; to solace the afflicted; to encourage the diffident with a view to their spiritual improvement. They will know, also, their own privilege, intimated in the words that "the secret of the Lord is among them that fear Him," and in the description that "they that feared the Lord *spake often one to another*, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that *thought* upon His name."

They who feared the Lord and *spake* often one to another are the same, we see, as they who *thought* upon His name. So the Psalmist couples, in his prayer, the *words of his mouth* and the *meditation of his heart.* All idea of avoiding or of correcting the sins of the tongue, all hope whatever of cultivating the habitual observance of the Apostolic precept, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how to answer every man," must be founded upon the religious frame of the bosom, upon the occupation of the soul by the high and saving truths of the Gospel of Christ. We must go to the source. "Out of the abundance of the *heart* the mouth speaketh. A good

man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things." Let us consider, then, as already in the case of our *words*, the necessity for praying and taking heed that the *meditation of our hearts* be acceptable in the sight of God. The heart of fallen man, abandoned to itself and to the influences, whether of this world or the world of darkness, which act upon it, will always verify the description of the state of things which preceded the flood, when "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Alienation from God, averseness from spiritual things, indisposition towards the purifying control of the Gospel, repugnancy to the meek, holy, charitable, and self-denying temper which it would engraft upon us—these are characteristics which, in a more prominent or a more disguised and softened manner of development, attach extensively to the professed Christian world; and being, in our best estate, in contact with all this, and having a remnant of infection uneradicated in our own bosoms, so long as we are here in mortal flesh, we are continually in danger, and the process must be kept continually in operation by which these evil influences are counterworked. The restless activity of the human mind and the ceaseless succession of thoughts suggested by the circumstances in which we are placed, by the objects which offer themselves around us, by the remarks which we hear or the conversations in which

we bear our part, demand from us the utmost watchfulness and the most careful regulation of the inner man. We walk, as Christians, "by faith and not by sight;" but our faith will soon be dimmed if we do not cultivate the habit of detaching our minds from the things of sense. We are liable to be absorbed, to be lost in the vortex of our complicated engagements in life. The duties of public office, the share which may fall to us in matters political or municipal, the calculations and competitions of traffic, the improvement of property, the provision to be made for the wants of our families, the economy of our households, the demands of society, the cultivation of favourite sciences or accomplishments —here is enough, without speaking of the snares of sinful pleasure, or the temptations which may assail our integrity of principle—here is enough, in necessary or lawful pursuits, to grasp the whole man, to fill up, without his observing it, his time upon earth, and tax the full energies of his nature. But what will be seen in the end thereof, if he have left no room for the ONE THING NEEDFUL of his existence—if he have so surrendered himself to the claims of the world as to let them interfere with, and therefore (for we cannot serve two masters) as to let them set aside, to let them deaden and obliterate in his heart, the claim of Him Who died for all, and died for all upon the obvious and plainly-stated understanding, that they who "live through Him should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again"?

In this position, therefore, of danger—my brethren,

it is a real, a great, a serious, an awful danger—we must study the state of our hearts; we must observe the current of our thoughts, the complexion of our meditations; we must grapple to our souls the solemn and glorious truths of the Gospel; we must constantly revolve in our minds the high destiny which is before us, the transcendent importance of our salvation, and the utter uncertainty of our existence below; we must familiarise ourselves with the word of the living God, meditating upon it day and night, and having recourse to all the standing auxiliary means to preserve a sense of religion in our minds; and, further, we must lay to heart the instructive lessons which surround us in the scenes of human life.

For the first point,—if we do *not* make that blessed word our companion and our guide; if we fail to comply devoutly, intelligently, improvingly with its positive institutions; if we attend mechanically, and rather in the way of worldly conformity than anything else, upon the ordinances of worship; if we disregard the calls to the Holy Communion, or if we just communicate, as a matter of form and custom, upon high occasions, once or twice a year; it is well for us to put the question to our bosoms, whether, with these undeniable evidences of defective attention to our spiritual interests, we are pursuing a safe and happy course; whether we should be ready, if God were to call us in a day when we look not for it, and in an hour when we are not aware; ready to go and render up our account before God; ready, so ready, that every night when we

lie down to our rest, we lie down trusting in Christ, that if we were to wake in another world we should be found among the heirs of a glorious resurrection.

Again, we are called upon to profit in the same way by the instructive occurrences which take place around us. They are always taking place: at some times in a more marked manner than at others; but we live in a world which, at *all* times, is presenting to us scenes of change, of suffering, of death. Warning instances of sudden death, unlooked-for gaps in the community, the disappearance, at a stroke, of individuals familiarly and prominently known, or sad bereavements in well-known families, following fast upon each other, and awakening the general sympathy of the place;—these are not only touching appeals to our sensibility, but also solemn lessons which, for his own personal improvement, the living should lay to his heart.

The Psalmist, in the former part of a passage which immediately precedes our text, asks, "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" and prays to be cleansed from his "secret faults." And oh what a catalogue is this—the catalogue of our unobserved transgressions, of our uncounted failures in the words which pass our lips, and in the thoughts and imaginations that float up and down upon the stream of our minds!

Before that God Who understandeth even our thoughts long before, Who is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways; of Whom it is declared, that "He knoweth the very secrets of the heart," of Whom it is asked, "He that planted the ear,

shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?"—before *that* God—that all-holy God, Who is "of purer eyes than to behold" iniquity—in what innumerable instances, of which we are ourselves fully cognisant, have we been guilty of vain, foolish, irregular, extravagant thoughts; unchastised and ill-directed wishes; little, low, earthly calculations of the future; glaring aberrations of mind even in our religious duties, from the objects which ought to engage it in fervour and holy aspiration; distractions and wanderings in the midst of prayers by which we are holding communion with God Himself! And if these are among the subjects of our own confession when we come before Him, how far beyond this is the account known to *Him*, Who is greater than our heart and knoweth all things! What are we to do, and where is our resource, with all this load of sin upon us, with all this conscious helplessness and frailty—lamenting that we have so perpetually been doing wrong, and feeling that we are so little able to do better—what shall we do, and what can we dare to hope? Shall we, with St. Peter in the Gospel (read to-day) say to our God, when the evidences of His greatness and power are brought home to us, "Depart from me: for I am a sinful man, O Lord"? No; we will not say that. We will follow on the prayer of the Psalmist to the end: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be alway acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord my STRENGTH and my REDEEMER." My Strength and my Redeemer! There, in those two aspects of our Lord God, we find all that we want: our *Strength*

and our *Redeemer*. We are weak, even when we are willing, and when our eyes are truly opened to the magnitude and the power of the obstacles to our salvation, we sink under the sense of our incompetency to cope with them. But "God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble:" it is precisely in our weakness that His "strength is made perfect," and He makes us "more than conquerors" in the end. And as the contemplation of our guilt before Him, together with our dread of its consequences to our souls, no less dismays and overwhelms us, than the consciousness of our native inability to struggle with our corruptions; this exigency is also relieved,—graciously, abundantly, unfailingly relieved. Sin is not imputed, transgression shall not be mentioned to the believer who has learnt to cast his care upon God, knowing that He careth for him, and the burthen of his sin upon Him Who is "mighty to save." He trembles no more under the weight of his iniquities; he appropriates, in all its plenitude of consolation, the assurance of his God, "Fear not; for I have REDEEMED thee: I have called thee by thy name; THOU ART MINE."

SERMON XVII.

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

1 Tim. III. 16.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

There are some persons *professing themselves,* like the philosophising heathens described by the Apostle, *to be wise,* who think it an evidence of their wisdom to lay down the maxim that where mystery begins, religion ends. Now certainly if we were to understand by *mystery* the shrouding of religion in a certain artificial awe, by a particular order of men supposed to be initiated in secrets, and possessed of dark attributes of power, by which they sway the imaginations, and turn to their own account the fears, of mankind, we may readily admit that where *such* mystery begins, there true and pure religion is grievously endangered. There we discern the features of priestcraft on the one side, and of superstition on the other; or, as we may be warranted to say, in a more indulgent spirit, of superstition simply on *both* sides; for there is no *necessity* for supposing that the craft, *as such,* is consciously and deliberately carried on by those who exercise it.

Their passions and interests are, indeed, enlisted in its support, but they have not personally contrived it; they receive it and cling to it as a traditional system. The Apostle, however, is no friend to any such *mystery* as this. "We are not as many," he says to the Corinthians, "which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." And again, "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

But that there are in the verities of our religion, which we must hold as essential and revere with profound devotion of heart, mysterious points unfathomable by the human intellect, demands made upon us to believe, wonder, and adore where we cannot penetrate—*this* the Apostle is so far from disclaiming, that he speaks frequently of the mysteries attaching in different ways to the scheme of redemption, and describes the ministers of the Gospel as "stewards of the mysteries of God." And in our text, before specifying the successive particulars which are to exemplify the declaration, he declares that "without controversy"—beyond all possible dispute—"great is the mystery of godliness:" the mystery presented in those truths of which the acceptance must form the basis of all godliness in man, all true and practical recognition of his relations with God.

The Church has very appropriately wound up, by a

Sunday set apart for the special contemplation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the series of observances which corresponds, point by point, to certain marked features of the Gospel history, and striking developments of the attributes of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. On that day, therefore, which is now not far distant, some notice of mysteries attaching to the *Divine Essence* may naturally be looked for; and it may be sufficient to remark, for the present, that we are surrounded by mysteries in every department of nature; we are ourselves an incomprehensible wonder to ourselves: and is it reasonable, then, that we should expect to pass familiarly within the circle of the sanctities above, and to pierce the clouds of glory in which the Godhead is enveloped? "The corruptible body," according to the words of the Wisdom of Solomon, "presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things; and hardly do we guess aright at the things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us: but the things that are in heaven who hath searched out?" God has graciously *revealed* Himself to us; but revelation does not import that we can "by searching find out God:" that we can "find out the Almighty unto perfection." If He has made known what will serve to guide and to save us, that is enough: we must not rudely take hold of the ark of His presence, and think that nothing is interdicted to our touch. We do not act a wise, we do not act a reasonable part, if, with all the stamp of divinity

which is impressed upon our religion, with all the irrefragable and accumulating evidences of its truth, with all the fulness of the provision which it makes for the obvious wants of our nature, all its congruity to our case, the overflowing love by which it addresses itself to our hearts, and the magnificent incitement by which it meets our yearnings and aspirations; I say we do not act a wise or a reasonable part, if, with all this before us, we stagger at any strange wonder which it presents, or depth in which our human investigations are lost. This is what we ought to expect. For His thoughts are not our thoughts: neither are our ways His ways. We are making an utter mistake when we measure the one by the other. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts, saith the Lord."

"Without controversy," then, "great is the mystery of godliness." And the first point stated in the enumeration of particulars is the mystery of the Incarnation: "*God was manifest in the flesh.*" The mystery of evil let loose upon the work of God, the mystery of a sinful bias in human nature, violating the implanted principle of conscience, and prompting mischief within and without the man; the mystery of suffering; the mystery of death; the mystery of a visible, broadly legible curse written in varied characters upon the face of all this fair and glorious creation,—these aggregated mysteries, locking in the one with the other,—call for, cry out for some mighty counteracting intervention, and some remedy commensurate with the magnitude of the damage.

And for this we must look as high as to God Himself, and God Himself must look as low as to come among us in the person of the Eternal Son, and to become one of ourselves. And accordingly, as soon as the curse took effect, and our ruin had been wrought, the means of our recovery were proclaimed. The seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head. Then followed the long train of preparation—types personal or ceremonial, which made the shadowy but certain resemblance of a wondrous future to pass before the eyes of men—the voice of prophecy, which sounded louder and spoke more distinctly as age advanced upon age; the severance from all the rest of the world of a single people in whose bosom the blessing was to be lodged; the tendency of events in their series which converged to one grand issue ordained by Him Who rules the destinies of men and empires. And with respect to the particular and leading fact, of which the influence inseparably and essentially pervades the scheme of the Gospel dispensation in all its parts, the mystery of *God manifest in the flesh*, the trumpet tones of prophecy following up the original promise which compensated the expulsion from Paradise, did, indeed, speak loudly and clearly here. "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name *Immanuel*," which word Immanuel signifies *God with us*. "Unto us a *Son* is born, unto us a *Child* is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the *Mighty God*, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Certain main objects and effects of this mysterious incarnation are what the Apostle proceeds to state; and the next step is that God, thus manifest in the *flesh*, was justified in the *Spirit*—flesh and Spirit being here, as elsewhere, opposed to each other, but here carrying in their opposition the high and special signification that He Who took upon Him our flesh, and was made in the likeness of men, was sustained in His claims to be an incarnate God by the manifestations of the Divine Spirit. We must regard Him as man and we must regard Him as God, for He was both; as surely both, as we, simply human beings, are most mysteriously compounded of soul and body. As man, then, in Whom dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," but still as man, the *Holy Ghost* descended visibly upon Him at His baptism; the *Holy Ghost* led Him on to His victorious encounter with Satan in the wilderness; the *Holy Ghost*, acting in what (according to the tenor of revelation afforded upon this point) may be called His peculiar province in the operations of the Godhead, abundantly supplied the Son of Man with a living energy of wonder-working power. The *Spirit*, we are told, was not given "by measure unto Him;" and "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the *Holy Ghost* and with power." The blasphemous resistance of this proof of divine agency in the person of Christ or of His delegates after His ascension, is the sin against the *Holy Ghost*. And thus was Christ *justified in the Spirit*. But above all, He was justified in the Spirit by the subsequent effusion of the Spirit from on high, Whom He had pledged Himself to send

For the Apostle, although at this point of the enumeration of particulars in our text he had not reached the statement which closes it, that Christ was *received up into glory*, yet must be supposed in bringing in here the words *justified in the Spirit*, naturally suggested by the mention of the *flesh*, to be looking at the work and the history of Christ as a *whole*, and so to *anticipate* at this point the fruit of His ascension: above all, then, the incarnate Son of God was *justified in the Spirit* after He had ascended up on high, and received gifts for men, which He dispensed, in broad display, to the Church below. In the first instance, by the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Ghost, Who proceeds alike from the Father and the Son, upon the heads of the Apostles—constituting the exact fulfilment of the promise for which He had told them to wait; and thence onward, by the continued witness supplied to them "both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost." There can be no better commentary upon the words "justified in the Spirit," than in that passage from St. John in which it is said that "the Holy Ghost was not yet given" (in the manner characteristic of the new dispensation) "*because* that Jesus was not yet glorified;" and that other from the same Evangelist, in which the Saviour says to His disciples, that when the Comforter should come, He would reprove the world of righteousness, *because* Christ Himself was to go to the Father and they would see Him no more. He, the Comforter, would afford the means of conviction (for that is the sense in which the word *reprove* is to be here taken) to the world

of the righteousness of Christ, of His pretensions to be *the* Righteous One, the Lord our Righteousness, *because* after His own disappearance from the earth, the manifestations of the Spirit would amply make good all that He had said. And among these is that manifestation, to the breast of the individual, of the truth and the reality and the preciousness of the objects of his faith which is described in the words, "The *Spirit* itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the sons of God." Or again, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." Not in any fanatical, in any presumptuous interpretation of those words, as if we were to look for direct, sensible revelation, and perceptible sensations of affinity with the agitation of the animal system in man, but as they describe that homefelt acceptance and personal appropriation of the *remedies* of the Gospel of grace which tells us that we have *there*, as the fallen children of Adam, with death and eternity before them, precisely found what we want, and that the voice of the Bible is the voice of God. We know Whom we have believed, and know that what has been proposed to our belief is not, cannot be, a fabrication, or a fancy of man.

Christ is also represented, in our text, as having been *seen of angels*. And from first to last, we read of their watchful and zealous attendance upon His person, and their interest, with all the earnest glow of pure and seraphic natures, in every object of His mission to this fallen world. An *angel* announced to the shepherds His birth at Bethlehem: "And, suddenly, there was with

the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." "Hereafter," He declares Himself, in a lofty indication of the greatness of the Child of the Virgin, with His retinue and escort of the legions of heaven, "hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." He was, in the assumption of our nature, tempted in all things like as we are, and His sorrows surpassed our sorrows, His sufferings our sufferings: but in the scene of the temptation, when the devil left Him, "*angels* came and ministered unto Him;" and in the agony of Gethsemane, "there appeared an *angel* unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." When He was in the hands of His enemies, He says to the follower who undertook to fight in His defence, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of *angels?*" When He had burst, by divine power, the bars of the tomb, and had gone abroad again a living man, *angels* were in attendance at the sepulchre, to inform and comfort the mourners who came to visit the place of His remains. When He ascended to heaven, and the disciples were gazing after Him, *angels* again present themselves, and direct their hopes to that day when He shall return in the clouds of heaven, in the full and overpowering exhibition of His own glory, and His Father's, and that of the holy *angels,* of whom thousand thousands shall minister unto Him, while ten thousand times ten thousand of

human beings shall stand before Him for judgment. The interest, the enthusiasm such as angels feel, with which they wait on Christ, and witness His achievements, and watch the progress of His kingdom, may be judged of from our being told that the unfoldings of the scheme of redemption were things which "the *angels desire to look into;*" that the Apostles, in their sufferings and perils for the cause of Christ, were made a *spectacle* to *angels* and men; and that "there is joy in the presence of the *angels* of God over one sinner that repenteth" and is saved in Christ.

The next point of the statement is that Christ was *preached unto the Gentiles.* Long before had it been foretold, under the exclusive and preparatory dispensation of the law, that the *Gentiles* should come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising; nor are there any passages of the Old Testament more vivid in description, more fervent in feeling, more pregnant with the grandeur of glorious anticipations, than those which relate to the calling into the covenant of grace of all the families of the earth, till, at last, "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Yet the practical development of this purpose, in all its amplitude of meaning, and unreservedness of equal blessing to either branch of the human family, was made the subject of a special vision to St. Peter, in order to open his mind to new and unexpected views; and is described by St. Paul, in writing to the Colossians, as a *mystery* "hid from ages and from generations." And repeatedly, in other epistles, he

adverts to it in similar language.* A glorious development it was; and referring to his own eminent privilege and peculiar commission in its advance, he says, that to him it was given to preach among the *Gentiles* the *unsearchable riches of Christ*, adding the words, "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ." And, thus, when we pray that God's *kingdom* may *come*, we should think of such passages as that in the Apocalypse, where an angel is pictured to us in vision as flying "in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

The Apostle says also, that Christ was *believed on in the world*. Alas! if we take the world to represent that multitude who pass through the wide gate on the journey of life, and walk in the broad way, we know too well that He is not, to any purpose, *believed on in the world*, and that, by a great portion of it, He was openly, scornfully, and fiercely rejected. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the *world knew Him not*." "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." These are among the

* Rom. xvi. 25; 1 Cor. ii. 7; Eph. iii. 4, 5, &c.; Col. i. 26.

scattered passages which sufficiently warn us that when it is said Christ was *believed on in the world,* we are not to satisfy ourselves in falling in with such a belief as the portion of the world at large to which we may belong, being now nominally Christian, may profess or entertain. We must still apply the maxim, "Be not *conformed* to *this world,* but be ye *transformed* in the renewing of your minds." But within the limits of the world which we inhabit, where the tares and the wheat grow together till the harvest, there have, from the first propagation of the Gospel, been those—and they will be seen at the last day (with the addition of those who, by anticipation, "looked for redemption in Israel" and "walked with God"), to be "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and people, and kindred, and tongues," who have effectually closed with the offers in mercy in Christ; who have followed up the privileges which were sealed to them upon their reception into the covenant; who have hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and found the promise made good to them, that they who so hunger and thirst shall be filled.

Finally, the Apostle tells us that Christ was "*received up into glory.*" The Man Christ Jesus—the Babe born in the manger at Bethlehem—the poor Wanderer Who had not where to lay His head—the Prisoner arraigned before Pilate, insulted, spit upon, and scourged—the Sufferer in the garden—the Martyr on the tree,—has loosened the bands of death, by which "it was not possible that He should be holden;" He mixes for a

while with some favoured followers, and then, all being finished for which He came down, and all in due train for planting His church and preaching His salvation upon earth, and all ripe for His return to glory, He passes up, in their sight, to occupy His place, in His exalted human nature, at God's right hand for evermore; "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world, but in that which is to come." There, having achieved our redemption, He ever liveth to make intercession for us; and as the power which He wields in our behalf is a supreme and illimitable power, so the fountain of His love is never dry. He is gone to prepare a place for us, that where He is, there we may be also. Do we want, can we ask, more than this? To pass from this world of sin and strife, of suffering, that we may share with Him the inheritance of glory?—the inheritance (in each of the three points contrasted with the most coveted acquisitions here below) "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

SERMON XVIII.

SINS AND GOOD WORKS MANIFEST BEFOREHAND.

1 Tim. V. 24, 25.

Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

It will be seen from the immediate context of this passage that the Apostle, interweaving some passing advice and instruction of a personal kind to Timothy, one of the governors of the early Church, is treating of two points: first, the exercise of discipline and Church censure; and secondly, the care and discrimination required in the admission of aspirants to ordination. And the words of the text are hence very generally understood as having a connexion, particularly in the former verse, with one or both of these two subjects. With discipline and Church censure, thus: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment," *i.e.* they are so flagrant and so plain upon the very face of the matter, that all necessity for any inquisitorial process is anticipated; "and some they follow after," *i.e.* in other instances the conviction of the offender is the result of investigation, or his bad character only appears by some prolonged opportunity of observation. And as regards the ordination of ministers, thus: "Some

men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment," *i.e.* there are some whose habits and deportment present so obvious a disqualification that the case, upon its first aspect, is decided and disposed of against them; "and some they follow after"—there are others who may appear to afford satisfaction, and may pass for the time, but who afterwards disappoint all such favourable estimate; and there is therefore the more reason for "laying hands" (as the Apostle speaks just above) "suddenly on no man;" for using the most deliberate caution in the reception of candidates for the holy ministry, in order to guard against the risk of trouble with the delinquents, as well as of scandal in the Church.

So, on the other, the favourable side—with reference either to the good repute and allowed standing of the laity as consistent and useful members of the Church of God, and their full admission to Church privileges, or with reference to the grounds of satisfaction and comfortable assurance in adopting individuals for the ministerial office, "the good works of some are manifest beforehand." Some are so situated, so put forward by circumstances, so gifted in themselves, and so publicly tested in the exercise of their gifts, that there can be no question entertained respecting their high and acknowledged place in the general company of believers; or, as the case may be, their eminent official fitness. "And they that are otherwise cannot be hid." There are qualities and actions different from these—there are men whose Christian graces and excellences are not

called, in the same way, conspicuously into action: their characters are retiring, their walk in life is perhaps obscure; yet, by the grace given them, they so keep the noiseless tenor of their way, in an even march of personal holiness, charity, and conscientious discharge of duty among men, and devout humility towards God, that from all who can appreciate the solid worth of a disciple of Christ they win golden opinions, as it were, in spite of themselves.

This appears to be the most natural and just explanation of the words, "they that are otherwise cannot be hid." A different explanation has been given, referring the expression, "they that are *otherwise*," to the contrasted case of *evil* men, who can no more be hid than those whose *good* works are manifest. But this would amount to a mere repetition of what is said in the former verse; and destroys also that correspondence or equilibrium which appears to have been intended between the different parts of the two statements made, respectively, concerning bad and good men. There are some more, some less conspicuously bad, but both bad: some more, some less conspicuously good, but both good.

My brethren, I have thus endeavoured to explain the passage chosen for our consideration in the particular connexion in which it is found to stand. It is, however, very evidently susceptible of an aspect more comprehensive than any which relates merely to the exercise of Church discipline, or the choice of ministers. Let us, then, pursue the enquiry rather more at large, and, by God's help, endeavour to profit by it.

And first of *sin,* in itself. "Some men's sins are open beforehand: some they follow after." What is this thing called *sin,* which meets us everywhere in the Bible; which is associated with danger, with death, with judgment, with wrath—the wrath of the everlasting God, present and to come?—this sin of which the universal existence in this world, and the awful consequences in the other, lie at the foundation of the whole of that Gospel which we receive; Christ having come, "not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance;" having come into the world "to save *sinners*;" having been "made *sin* for us," exempt from sin Himself, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;" and presenting in His own person, His own performance, and His own sacrifice, the means by which God "justifieth the *ungodly.*"

My brethren, the Apostles in different places and with some variety of expression tell us what sin is: *sin,* they say, "is the transgression of the law:" "where no law is, there is no transgression." "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust,"—I should not have been disturbed about the nature or consequences of any irregular desire of whatever kind; I should not have had any proper perception of them,—"except the law had said: Thou shalt not covet. I was alive without the law once"—had no apprehension, in my ignorance of the law, of incurring the penalty of death; "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," when the manifestation of the Divine will which I had violated was brought home to me, the

image of my sin stood before me as something real and terrific, and I felt that I had forfeited my soul.

Yes, my brethren, God has given us a law, and taught us to look forward to a day of judgment: He has given us a conscience—the law written in our hearts: He has given a revelation of His will into our hands. And this law we have broken, and are continually breaking. The great mass of mankind, indeed, but too broadly furnish the illustration of the saying that "God is angry with the wicked every day." But not only so; for "there is not a just man that liveth and sinneth not." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "If we say that we have no sin, we" do, indeed, "deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It is our nature to sin, the nature which we derive from Adam. The law of God, the law of our own minds rightly informed, and discerning things in their real character, is holy, pure, heavenly, elevated, calculated to refine, to exalt, to make us happy, to prepare us for immortal glory. But there is "a law in our members warring against the law of our minds. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other." There is something continually keeping us down in our endeavours to rise above the baseness and littleness of the world, perpetually dragging us back in our advances towards every object worthy of the immortal spirit within us. It is, in one shape or other, a surrender to this corrupt proclivity of nature, inducing an absolute forgetfulness, or at least obliterating any effectual remembrance of their high destiny, that we see

in *most* men ; it is a conflict, a struggle still to be maintained with it, although by the grace of our God, a victorious conflict and struggle, that we see in the *best.*

The sins of men, according to the intimation of the Apostle in our text, develop themselves in different forms ; and it must be almost needless to point out some of those sins which " are open beforehand, going before to judgment"—reference being had to the *judgment* of God Himself. The very fact of their being so open might seem to spare all necessity of describing them. The coarser and more revolting shapes of wickedness, the crimes which carry the stamp of infamy in the world, the scenes of human life which are to be witnessed within the walls of the prison, or in the lowest haunts of hardened iniquity, the exhibitions of ragged drunkenness or of roaring profanity—these are portions of the picture before our eyes, which the judgment of no man will be suspended in assigning to their proper class and character ; nor will any possible hesitation be felt in pronouncing how they must appear in the judgment of God. And yet these are the doings of *men ;*—we are of the same family ourselves, however we may disown connexion with what we regard as its reprobate branches ; —and it is well for us to consider how the sins and vices which prevail in different circles of human society are, after all, so shaded off, that it is the same tint of iniquity which runs through the whole. How many things are tolerated and connived at in the respectable walks of life, which, under whatever varnish of refinement, have still the undeniable character of sin, and if

brought to this test, *how do they look in the sight of God?* —the only touchstone of what is right or wrong, safe or dangerous to the soul of man—must be put down at once as unequivocally *wrong,* unquestionably *dangerous,* "open beforehand, going before to judgment." Neglect of the plainest religious duties—commission of things plainly forbidden—indulgence in habits plainly at variance with the purity and holiness and meekness required in the Gospel—a loose and easy morality in the departments of human conduct to which that word is more familiarly applied—an avowed system of returning, in certain cases, *not good,* but *evil,* for *evil,* perhaps an exaction of blood for a passing, casual affront—a prodigal, unreflecting, unfeeling pursuit of gratifications beyond all reach of means at command to pay for them—an unscrupulous recourse to intrigue and deception to carry on the public scheme or the political purpose which may be in hand—a received principle, a recognised practice of falsification in substituting the spurious for the genuine article, and other arts of the same stamp, in the common transactions of business—measure all this by the standard of the world, the so-called Christian world, it may pass, or a great deal of it may pass, perhaps, unchallenged; but is it, my brethren, is it in the *broad way,* or in the *narrow,* that men are walking who walk thus? and what is, respectively, the end of those two roads? and what does it import to a being with a never-dying soul, that, at the end of his road, he misses *life* and encounters *destruction?*

So far, then, we have considered cases to which there

is no doubt attaching. I do not mean to say (as may appear from remarks already made) that all persons will, without doubt, condemn themselves, or be condemned by others like themselves, who are following the courses which have been just described. The loosest livers and the most irreligious characters (practically speaking) will drop, upon occasion, some careless expression, implying their hope of being in the way to heaven. But no person who takes breathing-space to think upon the world unseen, and our preparation for it here, can come to the conclusion that preparation is to be made in such a manner as this. O let us, then, conjure the self-destroying sinner, the thoughtless and ungodly child of the world, the alien, of whatever class, from his God—let us conjure him to give himself that breathing-space—to say to himself, "Here I am upon the face of the world, like others that come and go. How did I come here?—what have I to do here?——whither am I going, when I go?" You came here by the pleasure of the Eternal God. What you have to do here is to serve Him, to do good in your generation, to prepare for a world beyond; whither you are going when you go, must depend upon your profiting by the mercy of that God in His Son Jesus Christ, and embracing the salvation which He offers to you. Are you doing that?—What! when you are living without one serious or effectual thought of God and your soul—when you are living simply and solely for the things of this world and your own carnal indulgence—when, in the pride of your heart and the fulness of misused

enjoyments, you actually disdain such a thought as that of taking upon you the yoke of Christ, and learning of Him Who was "meek and lowly in heart"? Oh, no! you are not—you cannot think that you are laying up treasure for yourself in heaven—you cannot, at this rate, think that your "life is hid with Christ in God;" and if that be plainly not the case, what is the alternative?—what are you then doing but treasuring up to yourself "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?" "Flee," then, in time, "from the wrath to come." Turn, like the publican Zacchæus—like the woman who was a sinner—like the thief upon the cross—no matter what the description or what the degree of your guilt—if you are not in a state of reconciliation with God through Christ, you are lost, and that is enough—turn as they turned, and you will be saved: the words will be spoken to you which were spoken to them: "This day is salvation come to this house;" "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" and, in your dying hour, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." But when we speak of being in a state of reconciliation with God through Christ, we may be a long way from this, although we may be clear of those gross and palpable transgressions, which afford the means of pronouncing at once and beyond all question upon our case. There are many men whose tenor of conduct does not serve to anticipate our unfavourable judgment upon their characters, and to supersede all necessity of enquiry, yet who are not sound at heart;

and we do not here speak of men deliberately under a mask, who

> "have within them undivulged crimes,
> Unwhipt of justice :"

but men who preserve, possibly, an unexceptionable moral deportment and an exterior decency in religion, yet whose bosoms are untouched by the living power of religion, and whose principles are not proof in the hour of trial; whose concealed but uneradicated sins will, perhaps, betray themselves in some unexpected manner, or break out with a sudden violence, when certain restraints may happen to be removed, or certain circumstances may present a new temptation. Happy for such men if, while they are resting in the mere formalities of duty, they, too, could be brought to look unsparingly into themselves, and to remember that they are under the eye of One Who is greater than their own "heart, and knoweth all things;" One to Whom "all things are naked and open;" One Who will yet "bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

We must now consider briefly the corresponding representation made by the Apostle, in its two parts, of the virtues exhibited by the true Christian: "Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid."

The Christian character—the character which belongs to a disciple of Jesus—is something engrafted upon the

human subject. It is not of the original growth of the plant. The plant, we may well say, is made to wonder at its new productions and fruits, which are not its own. They are "the fruits of the Spirit." The man is therefore said to be "a new creature in Christ Jesus"—a description which, like other equivalent expressions, has been embarrassed in the hands of unskilful, enthusiastic, or vainglorious religionists, with many hurtful human imaginations and many fallacious tests, but which simply imports that his heart and temper are moulded anew; that the vices of his old nature are cured; that his affections, his sentiments, his motives of action, his pursuits and habits, receive a new character impressed upon them from above, and his hopes are set upon a new object, and for attaining it find a new dependence. He recognises, as his ruling principle, the love of Christ Who died for him, and he guides himself in all things by a constant and direct reference to the Word of God. Now the light which he thus receives is not given to be "put under a bushel, or under a bed;" it is to be set "on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light." He is to let his light so shine before men that they may see his good works, and thence be led to glorify his Father Which is in heaven, be prompted to acknowledge the Divine source of a religion which can produce such blessed effects. His advantages capable of being turned to a high and happy account, his opportunities of doing good by his example, his means of usefulness and beneficence, are all so many talents entrusted to him upon which he is

to gain. And thus, in proportion as his sphere of action is extended—in proportion as his position is advantageous—in proportion as his resources are multiplied,—in such proportion his "good works are manifest beforehand." And he learns—it is a secret necessary to be learnt in the school of Christ—perfectly to combine and reconcile the observance of those precepts which we have just considered respecting the recommendation of his faith by his personal conduct in the eye of the world, and respecting the open part which he is to take in doing the work of God upon earth, with those which charge it upon him to let his alms be in secret, and not to let his left hand know what is done by the right. It is of his Master, not of himself, that he is to think; it is for the glory of his Master, not for his own credit, that he is to be concerned. And (as we have had occasion to notice before, in the more confined application of our text) however unobtrusive and retiring may be his character, however small his opportunities, however shady and secluded the track which he treads, his conduct and deportment in his genuine exercise of Christian graces cannot *be hid*. *They that are otherwise*—the performances of some men who are differently situated from those whose "good works are manifest beforehand"—still *cannot be hid*; the influence of these men is felt; and, *virtue* having *gone out* from their Lord to work within them a happy effect, a happy contagion is communicated *from* them to others with whom they are engaged in life. They are "acceptable to God, and approved of men." And although it be within

a narrow circle that they are known at all, and by the world at large they are perfectly content to find themselves overlooked, they cannot, in *any* case, be *hid* from *Him* who saw, in his sheltered retirement, *the Israelite indeed in whom was no guile.* They stand, in His sight, above many who make a noise, even in religious doings, in the world; and their case will serve, among other instances, to verify the saying of the Lord, that "many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

SERMON XIX.

GOD IN CREATION AND PROVIDENCE.*

Isa. XLV. 18.

For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is none else.

THE survey of creation, in all its amplitude and vastness, no less than the examination of its details in all their varied infinity and elaborate minuteness, suggests to the thoughtful mind the profoundest sentiments of awe and veneration, of wonder and grateful devotion. We have, in that survey, a book spread before us, stamped everywhere with the characters of divinity, impressed with the glowing evidences of illimitable power and all-wise contrivance, combining, in their exercise, with inexhaustible goodness and mercy. The lessons which men may thus read as they run, leave them, as is declared by the Apostle Paul, *without excuse*, if they fail to lay them to heart and to make the inferences which he indicates; "the invisible things of God," being, as he says in a strong figure of speech, "clearly seen," and the "eternal power and Godhead" of the Almighty "being understood by the things that

* Preached before the St. George's Society of Quebec, 1857.

are made." So, in his address at Lystra, recorded in the Acts,—earnestly and passionately repudiating the homage offered to himself and his fellow-labourer, and directing it upward to the invisible Supreme,—he points out to the ignorant idolaters that this God had never left "Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." And it would not be difficult to cite some remarkable passages from the more eminent of the heathen philosophers, exceedingly pertinent here to our purpose—passages tracing, in eloquent language, the Creator through His works, though standing in unhappy conjunction with the grossest darkness upon essential points of religion. They are flashes of light which break out through an almost impenetrable gloom. But the Bible, the book of God's revelation, instructs and prepares us rightly to study the book of nature; and the voice of revelation continually calls upon us to contemplate with solemn attention, and with fervent gratitude, the wonderful works of God displayed to the eye of sense. The Psalms overflow everywhere with bursts of devout feeling, prompted by this contemplation; and while they point to the heavens as declaring the glory of God, and the firmament as showing His handywork, carry us also into all the departments of this magnificent creation, and unfold before us all the scenes and stores of nature, all the large and varied provision which exists for the wants of the animal world; all the action of the elements, whether in those ordinary opera-

tions in which they minister to the convenience and enjoyment of mankind, or in those occasional forms of terrific disturbance in which they remind us of an awful power, armed with the engines of judicial infliction, as well as clothed with the attributes of grace and mercy, which from end to end controls the universe, and rules the lot of its inhabitants. The same prophet from whom our text has been taken, earnestly warning the people against their continual proneness to adopt or imitate the stupid systems of idolatry by which they were surrounded, appeals as well to their common powers of observation and reflection, as to their transmitted and peculiar advantages, and charges them in a strain of animated expostulation, such as may be instanced in the words, "Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He," *i.e.* it is Jehovah, the living God, "that sitteth upon the circle of the earth." And then pointing out the perverse folly and absurdity of attempting to represent by an artificial likeness, in order to religious veneration, the Author of all the stupendous effects to be witnessed in nature, and the providential Ruler of the world, he adds, further on, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold Who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by their names, by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth."

The Scripture abounds in similar calls upon the

creature, man, to discern the hand of the Creator in His works. The poor savage, if, as poetically described, he saw God in clouds and heard Him in the wind, would so far be right. But neither the untutored child of nature, nor the sage of the civilized and lettered world, nor the collective and concentrated wisdom of nations illustrious in arms and arts, and alive to the necessity of a public religion, have, at any time, in point of *fact*,—whatever, in point of reason fairly exercised, they *ought* to have done—arrived at any just notions of God, or of the origin and first formation of the world and its living inhabitants. Those of the most ambitious pretensions among them "professing themselves to be wise, became fools." Nothing, it is well known, can be more childish, nothing more frivolous, nothing can be more gross, nothing more impure and debasing than the fables which, with whatever incidental mixture of traditionary truth or of particulars borrowed, but distorted in the borrowing, from a sacred source, are found in all their varieties, and in all ages, and all parts of the world, to constitute the features of heathen mythology. And with reference to the actual history of creation, it is a subject of which man knows nothing, and can know nothing, except from the simple account, sublime in its simplicity, which is given in the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The simple fiat of His word, the bare signification of His pleasure, the brief unlaboured promulgation of His will that so things should be, caused them at once to be so. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and

all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. . . . For He spake and it was done: He commanded and it stood fast." The principle of creative power, the energy which brought out into existence all that we see in this rolling universe, in this moving and breathing world, and which assigned its proper function in perpetuity to every part, is found in those words which are cited as a signal example of sublimity by the celebrated heathen critic Longinus, "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light." Then comes the order of succession in the several portions of the work, and the gradation observable in its different departments, as distributed through the six consecutive days, the whole closing with the formation of *man*, who has been called the masterpiece of God on earth. "And God," we are told, "saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." Alas! the change soon came; the blight quickly passed upon creation; the mischief which was to mar the scene was not long in breaking loose; the traces of the early curse which came through sin are intermingled everywhere, and in all the diversified forms and variegated aspects of moral and natural evil, with what amply remains to us of *very good*—they pervade everywhere the glorious workmanship of God. The tares and the wheat grow together till the harvest. The face of creation, the history of the race, and the consciousness of his own case in the breast of the individual child of Adam, testify alike to the reality of the tale told us in the Bible. We look abroad upon a world, we recall a past, age by age, we contemplate a *self*, all of

which bring us to the same result; and, without or within, in that which has been or that which is, we encounter the confirmation of the FALL OF MAN. There is one voice wherever we take our stand, and one voice sent up from all around us, which is the echo of the voice of God in Revelation. And all this suggests the sense of desperate want, and prepares us for the great disclosure of the remedy. Christ, the same Christ Who was the Creating Word, Who "was in the beginning with God, and was God," "by Whom all things were made," and without Whom "was not anything made that was made," was promised from the beginning as the Seed of the woman ordained to bruise the serpent's head, was represented all along to the eye of faith, in the continuous chain of prophecy and type, till, in the fulness of time, He came "in the likeness of sinful flesh," a man among men, to repair the ravages of Satan, "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," and to "make all things new" in the establishment of a kingdom of grace. His Church upon earth is ordained to be "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations;" and the Gospel is travelling on to its appointed mark, till "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The place which man was originally commissioned to fill in creation, and the gradual development of the divine plans for peopling the earth and distributing over its surface, by arrangements which were prospective in their character, the different races of the human family, must be regarded in connexion with a train laid

for the advance of human happiness, and the progress of social improvement; the leaven of the Gospel, in these later ages, working, although often insensibly, its blessed effect upon the mass with which it is in contact, and prompting and helping on the general amelioration of the world. In the blessing conveyed to our first parents before the fall, they are charged to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it," and the formal and solemn grant of *dominion* is made to them, and, in them, to their children, over the whole animal world, together with the use of all the alimentary productions of vegetable nature. Next to that of creation itself, the most remarkable occurrence in the physical history of the world is the judgment of the flood; and the patriarch who, with the seven members of his family, survived that universal catastrophe, receives a renewal, nearly in the same terms, of the grant made in the state of innocence, with the addition—for the death of the creature was now a familiar thing—of the use of animal food. "Into your hand are they delivered," is a commission which, taken in its utmost comprehensiveness, may well be understood as making over to mankind all the benefits of the vast creation of God; all to be received as a gracious gift, and, at the same time, a responsible trust directly from the hand of Omnipotence. The influences of the planetary system, the processes of vegetation, the properties seated in an endless catalogue of natural objects which man is gifted with the sagacity to discover, the calculating power to adapt and combine, and the manual skill to bring into

activity; the winds, the tides, the rivers, and the interminable deep; the fertile bosom of earth, the quarries, the mineral stores within her bowels, the countless varieties of the forest, the field, and the garden; the wild beasts who yield their shaggy covering, the domestic animals who are formed and contrived in nice and diversified adaptation to different specific requirements on the part of their earthly lord, all are made tributary to man. All which can supply his wants, all which can minister to his convenience and comfort, all which can be turned to account in the commerce of the world and the advancement of science, or can contribute to the embellishment of life—all, all is made ready for his use, and placed freely at his disposal. "Into your hand are they delivered." "The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath He given to the children of men." O, happy if they could always recognise the Hand which gives them their daily bread, and in the survey of creation in all its profusion of stores and its loveliness of ornament, could be prompted to break into the devout exclamation of a Christian poet, "My Father made them all!" O, happy if they could feelingly adopt as a living sentiment within their bosoms, in its application to the material as well as to the spiritual world, the declaration of an Apostle, that "every good gift and every perfect gift is FROM ABOVE."

In tracing that distribution to which we have referred, of different sections of the posterity of Adam over the face of the globe, we find it stated that "the sons of Noah were Shem, Ham, and Japheth,"

(the *Iapetus* of profane story), and of them ultimately "was the whole earth overspread." A remarkable combination, however, is recorded, occurring within the lifetime of Noah, of men who, in forgetfulness if not in open defiance of the God above them, projected and commenced a prodigious and unequalled work, by which their own names (as they vainly imagined) were to be immortalized, and which was to be the centre and the means of consolidation for a far-extended dominion which they aspired to found. The tower which they were engaged in constructing within their new city was probably an idolatrous temple. It has been supposed by learned men to have been, after completion by other hands, the tower of *Belus*, the idol-god *Bel* of Holy Scripture, which is mentioned by Herodotus, who lived nearly 500 years before Christ, as existing in his own day at Babylon. At least it is supposed to have afforded the foundation of that structure. The authors of this combination had it for their professed object to prevent their being "scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." But the purpose of God was the opposite of theirs; and the thing which they laid their plans to avert was precisely the thing which was ordained to befall them. "The whole earth was of one language and of one speech." But God Who "made man's mouth," Who framed him with the power of articulation, and taught him the use of words—Who can, at any moment, make the mechanism of which He is the author in all the faculties of mind and body bestowed upon man, operate in any new way that He pleases,—

Who, upon one instructive occasion, put words into the mouth of the dumb ass, to rebuke the madness of a prophet—God, at a stroke, confounded their language, that they could "not understand one another's speech." It may here be observed, by the way, that this memorable exercise of miraculous power, in which we find the origin of the diversity of tongues among mankind, was, in a manner, reversed, although to a limited extent, in the no less memorable display of the day of Pentecost, and the continuance, for a time, of the gift of tongues, in order to expedite the propagation of the Gospel over the world. Of the miracle now under our notice, the immediate effect was to part off, here and there, in separate bodies, the several portions of the community who respectively spoke the same language, and so to provide for the occupation of new tracts of country, and to lay the foundation of different nations and commonwealths.

It is a signal and a melancholy illustration of the inherited debasement of our nature, that the leading points of history are intertwined, in the chain of causes and effects, with the record of personal or national sins. The oldest and most authentic history in the world, found in the pages of the Bible, is pregnant with testimonies of this description. The people marked out by the hand of God as the depositaries of His truth, and the channel of future blessing to all the families of the earth,—that people, sufficiently notorious themselves for their continual provocations and rebellions, were rescued from their bondage by a series of wonderful

judgments inflicted upon their obdurate masters in Egypt, and were seated in the promised land by the awful excision of the Canaanitish nations, whose enormities are represented as if the very earth herself vomited them forth from her bosom. The Israelites, under Joshua, in the fresher recollection of all the marvels which had been wrought for them, typically representing the spiritual deliverance of mankind at large by another *Jesus*, proclaim their determined and unalterable adherence to the Lord Jehovah, upon the ground, as they state their own case, that "the Lord our God, He it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and Which did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed. And the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord, for He is our God."

It was a noble and happy conclusion to which they were brought; and to some notice of the circumstances which prompted it we may shortly have occasion to return: let us, in the meantime, consider that the same Almighty Disposer of events Whose intervention in the earlier stages of the world was signalized to the nations in broad miraculous display, directs and controls, to the end of time, the destinies of the race. "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before

appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord."

It is an attribute of the Godhead, a peculiar prerogative of the Majesty on high, a feature in the administration of affairs below by supreme and inscrutable wisdom, to use the instrumentality of free and responsible agents, without impairing their freedom or nullifying their responsibility, in carrying on the general plans and accomplishing the special purposes of Divine Providence. The actions of men and the events of history are overruled to this end; and, in the very deeds of the most atrocious wickedness, men are found, with reference to the issue and the effect, to be doing what His hand and His "counsel determined before to be done." The time will not permit us to trace our way onward through the historic pages of the Bible, or that portion of secular history which is linked with the fortunes of the Church of God. Nor shall I do more than barely glance at those most wonderfully exact prophecies of Daniel which relate to the four great earthly empires to be succeeded by the kingdom of Christ on earth, or those sublime and mysterious pictures in the Revelation of St. John, of which the fuller development of events themselves must furnish the key, yet of certain prominent points in which we cannot fail to make the plain application to past or existing realities of the world. Suffice it to say, that the train of human affairs is not left loosely to take its own course, and the series of events to jostle fortuitously the one against the other. The reins are reserved in

the hands of God. In all the changes and chances of the world, in all the revolutions of kingdoms and states, in all the results worked out by political struggles and convulsions, or other painful experience in what may be called the life of nations, the same great ends of Divine wisdom are kept constantly in view. Look at all the achievements of science, at all the discoveries of virtues and properties in nature, locked against a long succession of ages, but only laid by for a crisis demanding more extended grants of power to the delegated lords of this lower creation; such as, in the one instance, the art of printing, in the other the magnetic indication of the north, and, in our own day, the application of steam to the means of vectitation by sea or by land, and that wonder above all these other wonders, the recourse to electricity for the rapid, the almost instantaneous transmission of intelligence, even through the depths of the ocean, to distant lands. Look again, at all the various stimulating incitements of a novel kind, so addressing themselves, in different quarters of the world, to the love of gain, to the spirit of adventure, to the taste for exploring and exhuming the monuments of a remote and mighty past, or to the yearnings of Christian philanthropy on an extended scale, as to give impulse to the continual movement of enterprising individuals, or the migration of large bodies of men; in all, my brethren, which has been here enumerated, singly or collectively, we behold the development, we discern the practical application of the Divine principle, we see it in activity, that *God Himself that formed the earth,*

created it not in vain; He formed it to be inhabited; and within His purpose is the recognition on the part of man, of the truth that *He is the Lord and there is none else.*

The context of the passage, as may be seen by any who consult it, points distinctly to the extension of Gospel grace to all the ends of the earth. The visible agents in those dazzling enterprises and diversified operations to which we have just adverted, verify too often the words of Scripture applied to another kind of occasion—"Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so"—their energy and zeal are too apt to be absorbed in their worldly object; but God is opening up the world to ameliorate its general condition, and to draw together more and more, in fraternal bonds of sacred formation, the different branches of the family of man.

I shall not dwell upon a particular topic, although it has been my aim and desire to suggest it to your thoughts in connexion with our subject throughout,—and indeed it very obviously presents itself upon the present occasion, and has accordingly been noticed upon the occurrence of the anniversary before—I mean the topic of that great commission which, in the providential distributions of the hand of God, appears to have been given to the Anglo-Saxon race dispersed, and that under different national auspices, far and wide over the globe, to carry abroad in every direction those principles and those privileges which have given them their ascendancy and eminence in the world. I shall only indicate, upon.

this point, the application which may be made to the case of the British population in these countries of the case of the Israelites of old. There were no such people as the Canaanites in Canada or the surrounding regions; and, if there had been, it would not have been the part of Christians to exterminate them. We are debtors—deeply are we debtors—to these barbarians, to benefit alike their souls and bodies. But it was decreed in the counsels of God, that the race which occupied the land, and in whose hands it would have remained one vast, unbroken, howling wilderness, should give way to a civilized and Christian population, and finally, that the territory should pass, with all the consequences attaching to such a transfer, under the power of the British crown. Within the depths of its dense and boundless forests, while tenanted only by wild beasts, and wilder men, what stores, what inexhaustible stores were treasured up for the subsequent exercise of human industry and art! Without attempting a complete enumeration, here is a soil ready to teem under the hand of labour with agricultural produce—materials on the spot (besides numerous quarries providing for prouder and more durable edifices) for constructing all needful habitations with rapidity and ease, the same materials furnishing a staple article of most extended commerce, as well as the means, in profusion, of a briskly-driven trade in ship-building: Vast chains of communication and conveyance by river and lake: Abundant fisheries upon a prodigious scale, and yielding large yearly exports, in the Gulf: As the country advances new supplies, new

resources opened day by day in Lower Canada alone, reminding us of the "land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass;" for, take only the eastern townships and the county of Megantic, and you find within those limits that the industry of man is beginning to direct itself to the stores there ready to his hand, of marble, of slate, of copper, of soap-stone believed to be the best in North America, and other minor productions of the mineral kingdom. The very rigours of the climate answering to a description found in the Psalms, "He giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes: He casteth forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold?" afford their share of convenience—incalculable facilities of transport in those earlier stages of settlement which are often marked by almost impracticable summer roads, and ready means for preserving animal food, for months together, in an untainted condition—a compensatory provision, serving to diminish the large demand for fodder which the length of the winter would otherwise create.

God, Who *created not the earth in vain*, Who *formed it to be inhabited*, has opened the door, in these countries, to the redundant population pushed out from the old world. He has introduced, He has established here, a people under British rule. While we cultivate the most friendly and cordial relations with all our fellow-subjects—while we breathe towards all men living a spirit of charity and peace—we may cling, without violation of these principles or sentiments, to

British institutions; we may indulge English feelings and sympathies; we may cherish the home of our fathers in the associations of memory and thought.

But, in the meantime, if our advantages are signally high—if during the recent celebration of a marvel* accomplished in the facilities of intercourse between two mighty nations, we took into our survey of consequences effects which flatter our national self-satisfaction, and minister to many proud anticipations—let us remember, with reference to the good which we are made capable of effecting in the world at large, and the manner of effecting it, and its connexion with the happy influences of our holy faith, that to whomsoever much is given, of them will be much required. Let us keep our heightened responsibility before our eyes. Let us learn the lesson, and lay it to heart, that we must all, collectively and individually, in imitation of our divine Redeemer, "work the works of Him" that placed us here "while it is day: for the night cometh"—it will soon close upon us all—"when no man can work."

* The completion of the Atlantic telegraph used in 1858, on a Sunday in which year this sermon was again preached, with some alterations. The event was marked at Quebec by a public celebration, of which a special service in the Cathedral formed a part.

LONDON: R. CLAY, SON, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS.

DATE DUE

TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY

978-3851

BOUND BY